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# **YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW**

**Older Adult Ministry  
in The United Methodist Church**

**Chester E. Custer**

**Published under the Sponsorship of  
The General Council on Ministries of  
The United Methodist Church  
1994**



## **IN MEMORY OF DR. PAUL MAVES**

**Consultant to the Task Force On Older Adults 1985-88  
Advisory Coordinating Committee - 1989-92**

### **Poems from the Life of Paul -**

#### **Miracle**

Winds sing  
Stars dance  
Jubilant  
Two stars  
Wandering  
In orbits  
Ordained  
Draw close  
Surprise  
Fire  
Lights  
The galaxies  
Falls on  
Eden  
Bethlehem  
Calvary  
Out of ashes  
Flowers bloom

#### **The Song Keeps On**

Beside our door we found a bird  
Cold and dead upon the snow.  
A thrush that lately soared the sky  
And sang through all the summer days.  
A flyer now by storm brought low.  
A feathered husk, frozen dry,  
A pair of folded wings and icy feet,  
We buried it by the garden wall.

This flattened mass was not the thrush  
That had filled our days with song.  
Singing and soaring was the bird.  
It's sad to see the change and fall.  
When summer comes along  
Wings will sweep the sky once more  
Again bird songs will be heard.

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California

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**A** ccepting the invitation to write a history of the older adult movement within our United Methodist tradition immediately took me back to the early days of the churches that are now part of our denomination. I was acquainted with our more recent history, having served as a Director of Older Adult Ministries for the General Board of Discipleship following my retirement, as a representative from the Board during the era of the Task Force, and then as a Consultant to the Advisory/Coordinating Committee. But the ministry of older adults, and the church's response to the elderly prior to that, gave me an opportunity to look more closely at some of the earlier manifestations of that concern to which we have been sensitized today. I hope that this attempt to trace our older adult roots as a church will prove helpful and of interest to others.

A multitude of individuals, many of whom have been older adults, have ably led us and made

us aware of the needs of the elderly and of the ministry they have to offer. Dedicated workers in the local church, and those in professional staff positions throughout the church, who have assumed responsibility for older adult ministries have been at the forefront in this endeavor. Statements from a few of these individuals appear throughout this book. Their affirmations and concerns are instructive to us as we chart the future.

I am indebted to all those who shared information with me, to C. David Lundquist, and to the following persons who read the manuscript in its formative stage: Trudie Kibbe Preciphs, Paul Maves, Betty Letzig, Dean W. Pulliam, Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., and my wife Elizabeth Earl Custer. I am grateful for their helpful suggestions.

Chester E. Custer  
Nashville, Tennessee

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a story of growth and change. From the first settlers to the present day, the nation has evolved through various stages of development. The early years were marked by exploration and settlement, followed by a period of rapid expansion and growth. The American Revolution was a pivotal moment in the nation's history, leading to the establishment of a new government and the declaration of independence. The 19th century was a time of great change, with the discovery of gold and the opening of the West. The Civil War was a defining moment in the nation's history, leading to the abolition of slavery and the establishment of a new government. The 20th century has been a time of great change, with the discovery of oil and the opening of the West. The American Revolution was a pivotal moment in the nation's history, leading to the establishment of a new government and the declaration of independence. The 19th century was a time of great change, with the discovery of gold and the opening of the West. The Civil War was a defining moment in the nation's history, leading to the abolition of slavery and the establishment of a new government. The 20th century has been a time of great change, with the discovery of oil and the opening of the West.



## FOREWORD

**T**he following story is told of a United Methodist pastor being appointed to a new congregation with a membership made up largely of older adult persons. On learning of this new appointment, a friend remarked: "With the type of people in your new church, you are going to have it easy — all you will have to do is to show up and preach on Sunday." In the eyes of the pastor's friend, the shape of that congregation was defined by a stereotype about older adults — that their ministry needs and the contributions they could make were not very comprehensive, all of which could be met simply by attending worship on Sunday morning. How totally wrong!

While some older adults may create that image and perception for many people, clearly the church is called to respond to them with as much variety and stimulating opportunities as any other segment of people. Not only must the church design opportunities that have been tested and proved successful with younger persons who are a part of the church, it is also essential that as we move toward the 21st Century we realize that the aging population in society will increasingly include large numbers of persons who in their younger years have not been related to the church at all.

More and more people are growing older and their life expectancy is increasing. Research tells us that by the end of the first quarter of the new century,

1.2 billion people in the world will be over the age of 60, with 70 percent of the elderly living in developing countries. By 2030, the world's older adult population is expected to more than double.

As we look to the future, let us recognize that attaining a certain chronological age does not end a person's viability for service. We must cultivate the experiences, skills, and opportunities of this important group of Christ's servants, and include them in the planning. The older adult population represents a diverse resource of women and men, full of wisdom, knowledge and expertise which cannot be wasted or taken for granted.

The materials contained in this publication recall the history of Methodism's involvement and responses to ministry by, with and for older adults. Chester Custer is one who is uniquely qualified from experience and commitment to present these materials to the whole church. He has retraced some of the early history of Methodism, added the results of two quadrennia of intentional study of the needs and opportunities for older adult ministries coordinated by the General Council on Ministries, and developed a resource which will prove invaluable to the church.

C. David Lundquist  
General Secretary  
General Council on Ministries



## OLDER ADULT MINISTRY WITHIN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**P**rior to the formation of the Advisory/Coordinating Committee on Older Adult Ministries in The United Methodist Church, only a few scattered churches had any emphasis on older adults. But since then our denomination has become much more aware of the vast resources available in and through this growing number of older people. The emphasis has been not so much on a ministry to older adults as a ministry by and with them. Age often frees persons to become more involved in the life and work of the church.

Bishop Ernest A. Fitzgerald,  
Council of Bishops Representative on  
Older Adult Ministries

"I no longer feel bad about being an older adult after attending this conference." That was the remark one of the participants made at the conclusion of the Convocation on Older Adult Ministries held in Fort Worth in 1991. Affirmed as a person of worth, she returned to her home with a new sense of dignity. Living within a youth-oriented culture, growing old is often underrated or derided, or regarded as something one should try to hide. Qualities frequently manifested as we grow older are often ignored or disregarded. Yet, there can be perceptions, knowledge, wisdom and good humor with advancing years that could not have been known in the days of our youth.

Over the past fifty years, there has been a growing awareness within the church that older people who have lived so long and experienced so much should be affirmed in their calling as Christian disciples. They should be empowered to take responsibility for their lives. They should have the opportunity to share their knowledge, gifts and service with others. Think of the multitude of older adults who want, not simply to be the recipients of ministry, but to reinvest their lives in meaningful forms of service! Concerns such as these have brought us to where we are today.

Dr. Elizabeth Welch, author of *Learning to be 85*, said in her keynote address at the National Convocation of Older Adults in 1982, "We are now at a very special time in the history of our nation and of the world. Something is happening which has never happened before — not to us in this nation, and, possibly, never before to the world. . . . This unique happening makes of the nation's older generations not a past that is gone, but a future possessing such numerical power and with such hitherto untapped potential resources that they become the dynamic

forces shaping every facet of life for the next century. . . . The effects are unpredictable, for since this force has never been evident before, there are no precedents to follow, no books to prescribe actions, no blueprints to form a design for this new age, no prophets to furnish ready-made answers." <sup>1</sup>

### AN AGING SOCIETY AND THE CHURCH

Older adults have always been an important part of the constituency of the church. In all probability the "elders" within our Judeo-Christian tradition represented persons whose age, faith, and wisdom commended them as leaders. The biblical record contains innumerable references to older men and women who have helped to guide us on our pilgrimage of faith. The situation today, however, is different from that of biblical times in that the life expectancy for an increased number of people who reach the age of "three score years and ten" has dramatically multiplied.

"During the past 100 years, life expectancy in the United States has increased about 27 years, a fact to be celebrated. The number of persons 65 years of age and older has grown from 3.1 million in 1900 (4.1 percent of the total population), to 28 million in 1984 (11.9 percent of the total population). This number is expected to increase from 34.9 million in the year 2000 (13.0 percent) to 65 million in 2030 (21.1 percent). The older population includes a disproportionate number of women (148 women to 100 men) and persons with a wide range of capacities, from active and employed to fragile, frail, to chronically disabled. The fastest growing age group in the population is 85 years of age and over, and the second most rapidly growing is the 75 to 84 age group." <sup>2</sup>

Those aged 55-64 years make up 9.4 percent of the US population compared to 13.1 percent in The United Methodist Church. Those over 65 constitute 11.8 percent of the nation's population, but 21.3 percent of our United Methodist membership. Approximately 2,300,000 United Methodists, nearly one-fourth of our membership, are age 65 or over. By the year 2000, estimates indicate that one-half of our membership will be 60 or over. The membership of The United Methodist Church, as well as that of other denominations, is growing older at a faster rate than the general population.

### A NEW FRONTIER

"The elderly in the United States of America occupy a new frontier in a rapidly changing society." So begins the Preamble of the "Statement on Aging" in *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church* "A frontier has two aspects: its hazards, uncharted ways, unknowns, anxieties; its promises, hopes, visions, and fulfillments. A frontier becomes a promised land when guides chart the way, pioneers settle and builders develop the land. But this new frontier is yet to be charted for the aged. Existing institutions have not been able to adapt fast enough nor have new institutions been created to meet the new conditions. Some research, however, has recently begun to topple some myths and stereotypes about the aging process and older persons."<sup>3</sup> It was in 1948, twenty years prior to the development of the "Statement on Aging" that Paul Maves wrote an article on older people as "A New Frontier for the Church".

Our emphasis on the role of older adults within the church and community in no way suggests that we are less concerned with persons of other ages. Ours is an **intergenerational** concern. Yet, with the growing number of older people, we must be increasingly aware of the needs and the potential they represent. The church of the future will be influenced to no small degree by the concerns, the values, and the visions they espouse.

Some timely questions must be answered. In what ways does the presence of older adults within the church and community influence the life, the work, and the programs of your congregation? Who will become an advocate for, and the coordinator of older adult ministries? Who will be the connecting link between the needs of the elderly and the social services available to them? Who will be sensitive to their intellectual and spiritual aspirations? It is a challenge to which any number of persons within a congregation can and should respond.

Lenora, a Sunday school teacher and retired

school principal, regularly visited older adults confined to their homes and within the nursing homes. Her's was a ministry by, with and for older persons. She became a liaison between them and the various community and state service agencies. She wrote letters for them, ran errands, took those who were able on short trips, read to them and prayed with them. She tried to help them to see how they were also in ministry by the faith and attitudes they exemplified. Many of them were an inspiration to others. Praying for other people and for those concerns that touched their lives became a vital ministry for some of them. A few became involved in a telephone ministry.

### A LOOK AT OUR HISTORY

It is our purpose here to trace the history of the older adult movement within the United Methodist tradition. That can give us a renewed appreciation of some of the ways in which the church has responded to an older adult constituency. It can also help us to become aware of how older adults themselves have borne witness to the Christian faith and supported the church by their commitment and service.

The scope of this particular study centers mainly on the positions, statements, and organized efforts of the denomination in responding to, and in giving direction to a ministry by, with and for older adults. Much of the work taking place within our jurisdictions, annual conferences and local churches could not be included because of the magnitude of what we know is occurring throughout our connectional system. Yet, it is there that so much ministry related to older persons is actually taking place. The limited number of personal stories is simply indicative of a multitude of others that could be told.

We acknowledge that similar histories could be written of other denominations. We are also aware of the ecumenical dimension of our concern in which several organizations bring together a wide representation of religious bodies around the issues facing an older adult constituency. Furthermore, the many community, state and national agencies that address the needs of the elderly are also part of our common history. And last, but not least, is the multitude of individuals, many of whom are older persons themselves, who are engaged in meaningful ministry with and to the elderly, and to others, within the community and in their own homes.

So it is that tracing the history of the older adult movement within The United Methodist Church must be seen, not in isolation from what is taking place in other denominations, in the community, or

within our connectional system, but in concert with those who share a common vision.

Our hope is expressed in the prayer of Dr. John McLaughlin at the National Consultation of Older Adults: "We pray to be saved from the settling down,

the complacency of age that only wants to be alone. Grant us the desire and the vision to seek a better world for those of coming generations, even as we acknowledge our indebtedness to those who have made a richer level of living possible for us."<sup>4</sup>



## CARING FOR WORN-OUT PREACHERS AND THEIR SPOUSES

**F**or everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NRSV) God's elders have stepped into history to reinvest their "oldness." By making age a friend, elderhood can turn impossibilities into the possible, resolve inherited wrongs and injustices, and bring to the world a new greatness and goodness, which is our legacy. I hope and pray that in God's fullness of time, our older generations will dare to keep their date with history as a people with a ministry and a mission, an opportunity and obligation. "Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days!"

Elizabeth Welch,  
Member of The Task Force; Author and  
Lecturer on Older Adult Ministries

Providing moral support, and financial help, meager as it was, for one group of older adults — the retired pastors and their spouses, and their dependent children — dates back to the early days of our United Methodist tradition. It was one of the earliest, if not the earliest, organized way in which the church made provision for its older clergy and their dependents. It was a way in which the church gave tangible recognition to the ministry provided by these servants of the church to their congregations.

### THE GROUP PENSION PLAN

Providing pension benefits for a group of workers in a given profession is of somewhat modern origin, whereas a personal pension given as a reward or public service dates back to the time of the Roman Empire. It always represented a free gift to an individual for some sort of meritorious service.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the employer looked after the individual employee in disability and old age. There seemed to be no need for an organized pension plan. Thereafter, when workers gathered in large groups around industrial centers, and were left to their own resources, they frequently found themselves in poverty and want when overtaken by sickness, or when they reached advanced age. Our modern group pension plans developed out of that kind of background.<sup>5</sup>

### THE METHODIST CHURCH

As early as seventeen years before John Wesley died, the Methodist Societies in America assumed responsibility for the support of a pastor's active years of service, as well as for the years of retirement.

Support was also provided for the spouse and dependent children after the pastor's death. All of that was made possible through a shared responsibility within a connectional system.

"Caring for preachers who were unable to serve because of age or illness, and providing for the widows and orphans of preachers was a concern of the early American Methodist societies. This philosophy of caring was evident at the second annual conference of societies which met in 1774 in Philadelphia and established the Easter Offering. This voluntary offering predated the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church which adopted the mandatory Preacher's Fund at its organizational Christmas Conference in Baltimore on December 24, 1784."<sup>6</sup>

At the Christmas Conference "the preachers took up a collection for the 'worn-out' preachers, and formed what may be considered the first pension program in The Methodist Church. The Preacher's Fund, as it was called, was a contributory pension plan to which a traveling preacher paid 20 shillings at the time he was admitted to the Conference [there were no women pastors at this time] and a half a guinea for each year thereafter. No minister was to receive benefits from the fund until he had made payments totaling 50 shillings or if he was in arrears in his payments to the fund. Besides what the ministers themselves put into the fund, the profits from the sale of books were placed in the Fund."<sup>7</sup>

### THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Providing pensions for pastors, their spouses and children within the Evangelical tradition had a checkered history. By 1898, the Charitable Society

of the United Evangelical Church was the primary source of providing pension benefits to "the aged, worn-out and needy preachers, and the widows and orphans of deceased preachers." At the Second General Conference of the church, held in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, the needed assistance provided by the Charitable Society was impressed upon the delegates, and the following action taken. "We ask of our preachers that they should entirely devote themselves to their office, and not attempt to prosecute secular occupations at the same time. As a consequence, it is a fact that only a very few preachers are able to lay aside and save enough from their salaries, that, when age or sickness has rendered them ineffective, they have enough to supply their daily necessities. And what is to become of the needy widows and orphans of departed ministers?.... If the church fails to provide an adequate support for those who have given their lives to her service, then the greatest possible inducement is forced upon her preachers, to burden themselves with secular pursuits, to the detriment of their usefulness in the ministry, or to withdraw entirely from active service." <sup>8</sup>

The 1902 and 1903 Conferences stressed the fact that the Charitable Society had thus far been unable to render the help needed to assist their "worn-out and needy preachers" and that there was no other assistance available. By 1910, a Superannuated Fund was raised in the several conferences as a supplement to the help provided by the Charitable Society.

In 1911, a proposal was made to the General Conference of the Evangelical Association, still a separate body from the United Evangelical Church, to establish a fund for "superannuated ministers for their necessary support in old age." <sup>9</sup>

The 1914 General Conference of the United Evangelical Church reported that the support of superannuated pastors, their widows and orphans was derived from money received by annual offerings in the conference, from the Charitable Society, and from their Publishing House. Also, that in some conferences, Preachers' Aid Societies had been organized to aid the work of caring for their pensioners. The 1918 General Conference recommended the organization of a General Ministerial Aid Society, but that plan was not realized until 1922. That was partly due to the fact that the question of organic union with the Evangelical Association was pending. The various annual conferences made provision in one way or another for their retired members. In several conferences separate organizations had been created for this purpose. <sup>10</sup>

In 1942, the Evangelical Church launched their Reserve Pension Plan, closing membership in the

old Superannuation Plan, and requiring all new itinerant elders to join the new, enlarged plan. In 1946, at the time of union with the United Brethren Church, the Evangelical Church paid pension benefits to 300 pastors and 341 widows; their Board of Publication contributed \$40,000 for that purpose.

## **THE UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH**

Pension benefits provided by the United Brethren in Christ Church had a history similar to that of the Evangelical Church. In 1921, the General Conference of the United Brethren Church, meeting in Indianapolis, voted to create a Ministerial Pension and Annuity Plan to aid "disabled preachers and their dependents." Prior to that, "small sums of money were given irregularly and without system for the support of old and worn-out preachers. Then came the benevolent societies, preachers' aid through the annual conferences, and the dividends from the Publishing House. But none of the plans or agencies was efficient, adequate or immediate in meeting the great and real needs universally recognized." Owing to pressing needs of other denominational interests, the campaign to raise the endowment was delayed. The plan to launch the campaign in 1930 was thwarted by the Great Depression. The 1937-1941 quadrennium was designated as the period when the Plan should be completed. When the plan became fully operative, four-fifths of the funds for the payment of pensions were derived from the church, and one-fifth from contributing members. At the time of union, there were 182 pastors, 181 widows, and 11 children in the United Brethren Church receiving pension benefits.

## **THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH**

When the United Brethren and Evangelical Churches united to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1946, a Ministerial Reserve Pension Plan was established. It was administered by a Board of Pensions. In 1950, 483 pastors and 553 widows received pension benefits.

## **THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

From the earliest history of the different churches within our United Methodist tradition, their publishing enterprises contributed to their pension plans. Currently, income from the United Methodist Publishing House, after providing adequate reserves for its efficient operation and allowing for reasonable growth, is to be returned to the church and added to



the ministerial pension fund of the Annual Conferences. From 1941 through the summer of 1982, the United Methodist Publishing House contributed \$33,466,151 to the Annual and Central Conferences for that purpose.<sup>12</sup> This is one significant way in which older clergy members and their families have been assisted by our publishing interests and our General Board of Pensions.

Over the years the pension system has grown more sophisticated and diversified in assisting older pastors and their spouses, as well as others who have been employed by the church. At the present time our General Board of Pensions has as its purpose that of "increasing the revenues and of

providing for, aiding in, and contributing to the support, relief, and assistance and pensioning of ministers and their families and other church workers and lay employees in The United Methodist Church and its constituent boards, organizations, and institutions."<sup>13</sup> The 1991 *Annual Report* of the General Board of Pensions indicates that \$160 million was paid in pension and benefit payments (excluding health and medical) to nearly 23,000 beneficiaries.<sup>14</sup> The great percentage of those recipients are older adults. In addition to providing pension benefits, the General Board of Pensions conducts pre-retirement seminars for clergy members, their spouses, and lay employees of the church.

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## RESIDENCES FOR OLDER ADULTS

**A**s we look to the future, we see a church with a great potential. Whether or not that potential is realized will depend in large measure on the guidance and leadership provided by our older adult members. As life expectancy increases, as early retirement decision continue to be made, and as the baby-boomer generation reaches its sixties, older adults will, to a large extent become the major decision-makers of the church. It is our prayer that they will join with others in accepting this tremendous challenge and marvelous opportunity.

William H. Millett,  
Yahara Delegate;  
Member of The Task Force and  
The Advisory/Coordinating Committee

Earl and Ann had lived in their home for nearly thirty years. But they had reached the point in their lives when they were slowing down. Keeping up with the daily chores became more difficult. They decided to move into one of our church-related retirement homes that provided long-term care. Ann's health began to deteriorate. She eventually had to be cared for in the home's Alzheimer's Center. Earl was able to walk down the hall from their apartment and visit her daily. He could have all his meals in the dining room. "It was the wisest decision we ever made. Looking back, I cannot help but believe that God's hand must have been guiding us," Earl confided.

There are more than 3,000 non-profit licensed church and fraternal facilities for older persons in the United States today (1993). Although such facilities are of relatively modern origin, the needs of the elderly that brought such facilities into being have a long history.

Caring for the elderly is strongly rooted in our biblical heritage. The Commandment to honor one's father and mother (Exodus 20: 12); the supplication, "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent" (Psalm 71:9); and the declaration, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27) — all challenge the faithful with the needs of an older generation.

Within Colonial America there were few agencies to care for the elderly. That responsibility usually rested with the immediate family and with neighbors helping neighbor, with no financial or organizational backing. It was a caregiving ministry, more often than not inspired by the Judeo-Christian ethic.

With the growth of the young nation, and as the

frontier pushed westward, charity-minded volunteers found they could no longer meet the mounting needs of caring for the elderly. Institutions such as "poor farms," homes for old men and women, orphan asylums, and hospitals came into being where people with nowhere else to go, and with no resources, could find care, meager though it often was.<sup>15</sup>

John Wesley's concern for the spiritual, physical and social well-being of the individual became an inspiration for the church to establish orphanages, hospitals, schools, and homes for the elderly. Although numerous agencies across America came into being to care for older people in the late 18th century, it was not until the mid-19th century that the Methodist, United Brethren and Evangelical Churches began building and supporting residential homes for the elderly. Between 1875 and 1919, over 800 benevolent homes to care for older adults came into being across the nation. A number of our United Methodist facilities trace their history to that period.

### METHODIST HOMES

Our earliest Methodist homes for the elderly include the following:

1. **The Methodist Church Home for the Aged.** The first denominational facility to care for the elderly was in a rented house provided by the Methodist Episcopal Church at 225 West 42nd Street, in 1850 — less than fifty years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Women from the Methodist Episcopal Churches in New York City met together and acknowledged that "some of their members were known to be destitute of home or friends and no longer able to

- support themselves due to the infirmities of their years; their only resort must be a city charitable institution and at the end a pauper's grave."<sup>16</sup> Twenty-three elderly "inmates" who paid \$1.00 per week for their care were the first to occupy this Methodist Church Home for the Aged, the Mother Home of the Church. The Home, located in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, has a current capacity of 113 residents.
2. **The N. M. Carroll Home.** The first residential home for ethnic minority persons was founded in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1865. The Reverend Nathaniel Monroe Carroll, pastor of Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church believed there should be a home to care for indigent Black persons of his community. The home was in the residence of Mrs. Matilda Wilson, a member of the Sharp Street congregation. The home is still in operation today and can accommodate 99 persons.
  3. **Simpson House,** established in Philadelphia in 1865, was the first *retirement* home historically related to The United Methodist Church. The House was named in honor of Bishop and Mrs. Matthew Simpson who acted on the plea in behalf of the elderly by the wife of the Reverend John Henry. It was originally established as a Ladies' United Aid Society of The Methodist Episcopal Church. It is still in operation and can accommodate 300 persons.
  4. **The Old People's Home** of Portland, Oregon, was begun in 1893 by Peter and Anna Mann. The Mann Home opened in 1910 and eventually merged with Willamette View Manor, Inc., in 1980. The Manor, the Convalescent Center, and the Mann Terrace have a combined capacity of 580 residents.
  5. **The Old Ladies Home Association,** of Elyria, Ohio, was begun by Mary Lilly in 1896. It is now known as the Elyria United Methodist Home and has a capacity of 342 persons.
  6. **The Sunset Home** in Quincy, Illinois, was founded in 1889 when Charles and Augusta Pfeiffer opened their home to persons who were alone. Later, the St. Louis Conference of the German Methodist Episcopal Church assumed responsibility for the facility when the Pfeiffer home could no longer accommodate all of those who applied for admission. It has a present capacity of 253 residents.
  7. **The Methodist Home on College Hill,** in Cincinnati, Ohio, was founded in 1899. It is now known as Twin Towers Retirement Community and participates in the Otterbein Homes Corporation through a management contract.
  8. **The Methodist Home** in Topeka, Kansas, was chartered in 1904. It is now known as United Methodist Homes, Inc. The Home accommodates 220 residents.
  9. **The Methodist Memorial Home for the Aged,** in Warren, Indiana, came into being in 1907, through a bequest of William and Ruth Chopson. It is now known as the United Methodist Memorial Home with a capacity of 655.
  10. **Bethany Methodist Home** of Brooklyn, New York, was the first Home for the Aged founded by the Deaconesses. The first German deaconesses, on furlough from the Deaconess Hospital in Hamburg, Germany, and the Head Deaconess from the Methodist Home in Zurich, Switzerland, arrived in New York in 1893. By 1904, eighteen deaconesses were working among the Methodists of the East German Conference, and one year later, the conference approved Bethany Home for the Aged.<sup>17</sup> Today it has a capacity of 30 residents.
  11. **Epworth Manor Retirement Center** of Tyrone, Pennsylvania, was founded in 1919. It is one of six facilities supervised by United Methodist Homes for the Aging, Inc.
  12. **Asbury Methodist Village** in Gaithersburg, Maryland, opened its doors on April 15, 1926, to its first five residents. It is part of Methodist Homes, Inc. Asbury Home has a capacity of 206 persons, and the Apartments of 550.

## EVANGELICAL HOMES

The United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Churches operated nine homes for the aged and children at the time of union in 1946, when they became the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Prior to 1946, the Evangelical Church had the following homes for the elderly in the United States:

1. **The German Home Society.** The Evangelical Church's first home for the elderly was chartered on August 19, 1888 as "De Deutsche Heimaths Verein" (The German Home Society). "A few months earlier, a small group of women had met

and devised means, 'with an unselfishness and devotion to Christ's own, and for the proper care of those upon whom the infirmities of age had fallen heavily, together with limited visible means of subsistence... for the proper and Christian care of their aged people.'"<sup>18</sup> The Home was located in downtown Philadelphia in a rented house. In 1950 the name of the Home was changed to the Evangelical Manor. Today, the Manor can accommodate 340 residents in all levels of care.

**The Western Old People's Home** was opened in 1911, in Cedar Falls, Iowa, after financial support and a building site had been provided by members of the Pfeiffer and Merner families. It has a present capacity of 240 residents.

**The Evangelical Home** in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, founded in 1912, began with a bequest of \$115. It is now known as the Lewisburg United Methodist Home.

**The Haven Hubbard Memorial Old People's Home** was established in 1922, in New Carlisle, Indiana, as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Haven Hubbard having deeded their farm to the Evangelical Church. The Home is now known as Hamilton Grove, Inc., and has a capacity of 174 residents.

**The Pacific Evangelical Home for Aged People**, in Burbank, California, was founded in 1922, "to care for her retired ministers and deserving laymen of the church."

**The Ebenezer Old People's Home**, in Ebenezer, New York, was operating at a financial loss in 1926, and recommended to the General Conference "that the Home continue to operate until such time as its obligations to its members be fulfilled and it can be legally closed or amalgamated with some other home."<sup>19</sup> It was still in operation under the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1946.

## UNITED BRETHREN HOMES

The United Brethren in Christ Church had the following homes for the elderly in the United States prior to 1946:

**The Quincy Home.** The first home for the aged of the United Brethren Church, originally known as the Old People's Home, had its origin in 1893 when a retired pastor of the Pennsylvania

Conference, the Reverend Z. A. Colestock of Mechanicsburg, donated his residence to the church as a home for the elderly. By 1913, the responsibility which he had undertaken became too heavy, and the residents of Mechanicsburg were brought to Quincy, Pennsylvania, where in 1903 Harvey and Henrietta Kitzmiller established a haven for orphaned children. The two agencies were joined into the Quincy Orphanage and Home. In 1954, residents at Quincy Home paid \$1,210 per year for care. The home is now known as the Quincy United Methodist Home.

2. **The Colonel R. M. Baker Home**, in La Puente, California, is located on a tract of land called "Otterbein," twenty-six miles east of Los Angeles. The Home owes its existence to the generous gifts of Colonel and Mrs. R. M. Baker who were beloved members of the United Brethren Church. Other individuals and local church contributions assisted in the building enterprise. The Home was incorporated in 1911. It now serves as a retirement community for United Methodist ministers and their spouses, missionaries, deaconesses and Directors of Christian Education.
3. **The Otterbein Home.** In 1912, the United Brethren Church purchased land from the Shakers and established Otterbein Home in Lebanon, Ohio. The vision for such a Home grew out of the concern of the Reverend Joseph M. Phillippi who saw people from his own congregation spending the last part of their lives in the county home. In its early days, Otterbein Home was a "free home for old people, a free home for old ministers and their wives, a free children's home."

## EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN HOMES

In 1966, two years prior to the formation of The United Methodist Church, there were 1,000 residents in the Evangelical United Brethren facilities for older adults in the United States. The average annual cost per resident at that time was \$2,091,<sup>20</sup> an amount considerably less than today. The church also operated homes for the elderly in Germany and Switzerland.

## UNITED METHODIST HOMES

There were 151 homes for the elderly in 1968 when The Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Churches united to form The United Methodist Church.

"Today, we have seen a significant development of United Methodist retirement centers, residential housing units, nursing care centers, and other forms of residential and nonresidential care for aging persons in our society. The United Methodist tradition has spurred on the development of more than 250 such institutional centers around the United States, representing the largest Protestant healing and

caring ministry for the aging in the United States." These facilities employ 24,840 persons annually and care for 70,605 older adults in residential and nonresidential care settings.<sup>21</sup> Our homes for the elderly are administratively related to The United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries, 601 Riverview Avenue, Dayton, Ohio 45406.<sup>22</sup>

## OUR CHURCH-RELATED HOSPITALS

**T**he work of older adult ministries has been a model for the church of how organizing around critical issues facing different populations can shape the future of the church and society. For the General Board of Church and Society, this means involving older adults in advocacy for a national health care policy providing universal access to comprehensive benefits while assuring fiscal responsibility and equitable funding. Almost 40 million Americans have no access to health, with one in four having little or no health care at all. This issue gravely affects children and older adults more than any others. If the critical health care issue is not solved, all of the other related issues for older adults are placed in jeopardy.

Jane Hull Harvey,  
General Board of Church and Society  
Representative: The Committee on  
Older Adult Ministries

Our hospitals that serve persons of all ages, including older adults, are also very much a part of our ministry. The Gospels contain various accounts of Jesus' healing ministry. He healed the sick. He showed compassion to those who suffered from injury, disease and mental illness. Through the centuries, the Christian church has tried to respond to the needs of the ill, the suffering, and the dying with a spirit of compassion and concern reminiscent of Jesus himself.

"One such example was the life and work of John Wesley. Wesley studied the medicine of his day, including folk medicine; and his treatments had a success ratio that would surprise many of us, from a modern medical perspective. He pioneered in psychosomatic medicine and was the first person to use electric shock treatment for mental illness. His concern for the health needs of his fellow human beings has been carried on by his followers in the United States and around the world. United Methodist-related hospitals are an outstanding example of this heritage."<sup>23</sup>

### EARLY METHODIST HOSPITALS

Our hospitals, like our homes, have a long history. In 1808, the Candler General Hospital in Savannah, Georgia, was founded as a seaman's hospital and poorhouse. It became formally related to our church in 1930.

The following story reveals the concern of the church in establishing hospitals over a century ago. In 1877 a church organist from Stamford, Connecticut, was visiting in New York City. As he walked a

runaway team of horses charged down the street and struck him. He lay wounded in the street for an hour before an ambulance came. He was taken to 'an unhomelike institution' where his arm was amputated and within a few hours he died.

"His close friend and pastor of the church was the Rev. James Monroe Buckley. Grieving over what he regarded as an unnecessary death, Buckley vowed to do something about health care.

"His opportunity came when, in 1880, he was made editor of *The Christian Advocate*, an influential newspaper of what was then the Methodist Episcopal Church. He published an editorial January 17, 1881, stating: 'The Methodist Episcopal Church is today, so far as we can learn, without a hospital, a dispensary, an industrial school, or, except in mission fields, an orphan asylum under her control.... Is it not time that somewhere we build a hospital?'

"As a direct result of the editorial, physicians, clergy and philanthropists became interested in the proposal. In May of 1881 the State of New York gave a charter to what is now the Methodist Hospital of Brooklyn. After many difficulties had been overcome, on December 15, 1887 a 70-bed hospital was opened.

"The young hospital did a great deal of charity work because the majority of patients were extremely poor. Accommodations in open wards cost \$10 per week or \$1.50 per day. The price for private rooms ranged from \$15 to \$30 per week.

"A training school for nurses was organized in 1888 and the same year an ambulance was put on the street with two physicians in attendance. A children's

ward was added in 1889. The hospital has grown through the years and has kept pace with medical progress. Now it has 531 beds and 42 bassinets. In a recent year it had more than 16,000 admissions and 131,00 patient days." <sup>24</sup>

We currently have 58 hospital corporations which are related to, or have had historical ties to, The United Methodist Church. Some of them are single hospitals whereas others are part of a multi-hospital system. One-half of the 58 hospitals, responding to a survey, indicated that of their number over 44,000 persons were employed, serving over two million individuals annually. Their facilities offered over 60 million dollars in free care given annually. Only a fraction of our church-related hospitals receive financial help from our connectional system. Most of the funds which are received through the church come from annual conference apportionments, local church contributions, and Golden Cross. <sup>25</sup>

Although no statistics are available on how many patients in our church-related hospitals have been, or are, older adults, we know that a significant percentage of those cared for are the elderly. A goodly number of older adults sooner or later are admitted as patients to our hospitals. Some of our United Methodist-related hospitals provide extended care for the elderly. The Bruceville Center of the Methodist Hospital in Sacramento, California, that has historic ties to the denomination, is one such hospital.

### **GOLDEN CROSS**

Many United Methodist Churches receive an annual Golden Cross offering, authorized by *The Book of Discipline*, which is used within the conference to help subsidize the church's health and welfare ministries. Many older adults benefit from these offerings.

### **HOME ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAM (HALP)**

The story is told of Evelyn, 83 years old and widowed for more than thirty-five years. She has no living children and only one sister who has glaucoma and who requires the use of a walker. Evelyn has chosen to live "a fulfilling and independent life alone in her own home." It is persons like Evelyn who need the kind of help offered by the Home Assisted Living Program (HALP), established in 1982 as an outreach ministry of the Frasier Meadows

Manor Health Care Center in Boulder, Colorado. It is a program that reaches out to the homebound aged. The purpose of HALP is to provide "a valuable service to people choosing to live at home." Although only about five percent of the elderly ever require special care in a skilled nursing facility, 95 percent either live at home or in retirement facilities. "Studies show that 90 percent of the people currently receiving the services of HALP are in need of non-skilled homemaking and personal care services, ...[such as] assistance with housekeeping, grocery shopping, errands, visits to the doctor, bathing and grooming... . The Rocky Mountain United Methodist Homes and Ministries, the sponsoring organization of the Frasier Meadows Manor Health Care Center and of the HALP program, has designed HALP so that it can be adapted and customized to the needs of an individual church organization as it seeks to meet the needs of the elderly within its own community." <sup>26</sup>

HALP is only one such program that responds to the needs of the elderly. In many communities the Shepherd's Center program would offer comparable ministries to older adults. In addition to the various organized efforts that enable the elderly to cope with the problems they face, are a multitude of neighbors, friends, and family members, many of whom are older persons themselves, who become caregivers to those who need assistance with carrying on their daily lives.

### **CALLED TO A HOLISTIC MINISTRY**

Bertha, an elderly woman with a radiant Christian spirit was dying of cancer. Her son said in the latter days of her illness, "Mother is not well, but she is whole." Whole, in terms of her faith, the support of family and friends, and the skill of doctors and nurses who attended her. The United Methodist Church "understands itself as called by the Lord to the holistic ministry of healing: spiritual, mental and emotional, and physical."

Our church-related hospitals, like our homes, are related to the Association of Health and Welfare Ministries of the General Board of Global Ministries. The purpose of these ministries "shall be to assist United Methodists to become involved globally in health and welfare ministries, especially in areas of child care, aging, health care, and persons with handicapping conditions."



## THE PRINTED WORD AND OLDER ADULTS

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**I**would hope to see more information and older adult resources coming from the General Board of Discipleship. Many of our resources are not related to the "chronologically gifted" older persons. Local congregations need to become more intergenerational. An emphasis on age-level ministries should not divide children, youth, adults and older persons from one another. Churches need to be reminded of the hearing impaired and of those who need large-print resources.

Mattie Henderson,  
Member of The Task Force;  
The Advisory/Coordinating Committee; and  
The Committee on Older Adult Ministries

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Traditionally it has been the duty of faithful Jews and Christians to transmit their spiritual heritage to their children, and to others. Those who would have been considered older adults, sometimes referred to as "elders" in the Scripture, played a major role in that undertaking. Oral tradition, as well as ancient manuscripts have preserved for us a rich heritage. The story of Jesus' life, and the gospel he taught, were transmitted both orally and in written form.

The former denominations which became part of The United Methodist Church continued this ancient tradition, using the printed word to educate and nurture people in the faith. John Wesley (1703-1791), founder of The Methodist Church, was a prolific writer, translator and editor. He wrote and edited more than 500 books and pamphlets. By 1789, Circuit Riders, ministering to people across the American frontier, carried within their saddlebags a "book store" and a "traveling library" consisting of both books and tracts. William Philip Otterbein (1726-1813), founder of the United Brethren in Christ Church, is said to have destroyed most of his papers out of a sense of modesty during the last year of his life. No known writings exist from Jacob Albright (1759-1808), founder of the Evangelical Church.

### OLDER ADULTS AND THE PRINTED WORD

From the earliest days of our denomination, older adults have made significant contributions to the publications of the church. They have been both students and teachers of the literature the church produced.

The Methodist Book Concern was organized in Philadelphia in 1789 — two years prior to the death of John Wesley. It was the first church publishing house in America. By 1816 the Evangelical

Association was operating its own publishing enterprise. In 1894, the United Evangelical Church recommended the creation of a Board of Publication, which had the responsibility of producing resources in both English and German. The United Brethren Church authorized a printing establishment in 1833. From the presses of these churches came a succession of hymnals, *Disciplines*, newspapers, magazines, Sunday school materials and other Christian literature to nurture the membership.<sup>27</sup> The Methodist Publishing House opened in Nashville in 1854.

### LITERATURE FOR OLDER ADULTS

It was over a hundred years ago that the church began publishing literature that demonstrated a special concern for home members that included older adults. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, began publishing the *Home Department Quarterly* in 1897. Its first editor was James Atkins. By 1921 the name of the periodical was changed to *The Home Quarterly*.

From 1901 until 1941, the Methodist Episcopal Church published a periodical by the same title, *The Home Quarterly*.

The Otterbein Press of the United Brethren Church, in Dayton, Ohio, was publishing *The Otterbein Home Department Quarterly* by 1901, and *Our Senior Lesson Quarterly* by 1905.

By 1917, the United Evangelical Church was publishing *The Home Department Quarterly*.

All of these home quarterlies included older adult interests and concerns. Although they were not written just for this age group, in all probability older adults comprised the major constituency.

From 1941 until 1954, The Methodist Church published another *Home Quarterly* which was at

that time the only magazine of any denomination specifically produced for older adults. It included Bible study written especially for older people.

## MATURE YEARS

It was through the leadership of Charles M. Laymon, Editor of Adult Publications at The Methodist Publishing House, that *Mature Years* came into being. The first issue of *Mature Years* (October-December 1954) carried the introduction: "A Star Is Born. *Mature Years* received its name after many months of search. We wanted a title that would describe the interests and achievements of those who would read it. Since it was intended for older adults the word *Years* was a good one. And since it was to reflect the wisdom and experience which time brings to Christians, the word *Mature* was in order. *Mature Years* is a successor to *Home Quarterly*, which has been a long-time favorite. Particularly it has been the magazine for home members. *Mature Years* will continue to be the home members' very own publication, but it is intended also for all older adults, whether active or retired." <sup>28</sup>

John W. Cook was appointed as editor of this new periodical. Shortly thereafter, Daisy Dozier Warren joined him as assistant editor. She later became the editor, serving the publication for a total of thirty years (1955-1985). Through her leadership an advisory board composed of representatives from the various boards and agencies of the church helped to determine the content of the periodical. Jack Gilbert became the next editor, followed by Donn Downall, and then by the present editor, Marvin W. Cropsey.

The audience of *Mature Years* is persons of retirement age and beyond (55 years and over). It has as its purpose that of "helping persons understand and use the resources of the Christian faith in dealing with specific opportunities and problems related to aging." <sup>29</sup>

## OTHER RESOURCES RELATED TO OLDER ADULT MINISTRIES

Over the years, the various Boards and Agencies of the church have produced many resources dealing with older adult issues. The General Board of Church and Society published such documents as *Faithful Witness on Today's Issues: Aging*, *The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church*, and "Aging in the Eighties" in *Engage/Social Action* (June 1981). *Our Congregation's Ministries with Older Adults*, written by Rosalie Jenkins Lawson, was published in 1983 by Discipleship Resources. *A Ministry to Match the Age: A Report of the National Consultation of Older Adults in The United Methodist Church*, which was an outgrowth of the Yahara Consultation, edited by Paul Maves, was published in 1984, by the Health and Welfare Ministries Program Department of the General Board of Global Ministries. The 1991 revision of the manual was edited by Susanne Paul. A Spanish language version will be available in 1994.

Two newsletters related to older concerns have been published. Since 1984, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, in cooperation with the General Board of Pensions, has published *Prism* for retired United Methodist clergy and spouses. From 1984-1988 the General Board of Discipleship published *Horizons* for directors and leaders of older adult ministries. *The Gift of Maturity*, edited by Chester E. Custer, was published in 1986 by Discipleship Resources. And, in 1992, the General Board of Discipleship introduced *Information: Adult Ministries* as a resource for leaders in adult and older adult ministries, edited by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. In addition to printed resources published by our Boards and Agencies, audiovisuals dealing with older adult issues are available from EcuFilm, 810 12th Avenue, South, Nashville, TN 37203 (phone: 1-800/251-4091).

## THE WORK OF VIRGINIA STAFFORD

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**M**y hope is that older adults will see and understand themselves in their diversity, with great capacities, in which they can continue to be agents of the Christian message. My concern is that they become advocates and give out of their rich experience.

Susanne Paul,  
General Board of Global Ministries:  
Member of The Task Force and  
The Advisory/Coordinating Committee

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John Q. Shissler, General Secretary of the Division of the Local Church, and Leo Rippey, Sr., Director of Adult Education, of the former General Board of Education, believed that the Board should have a staff person with older adult responsibilities. In 1944, Virginia Stafford (1910-1977) was asked to assume that position. This represented the first professional staff position of any denomination which gave major attention to older adults. From 1946-1948 the Board participated in "The Church's Ministry with Older Adults" conducted by the Federal Council of Churches. Virginia Stafford continued her work motivating leaders of older adults until her retirement from the General Board of Discipleship in 1975.

### A TRIBUTE TO VIRGINIA STAFFORD

Robert Clemmons, the Director of Adult Education of the General Board of Discipleship, wrote a memorial tribute to Virginia Stafford in which he said:

"Long before consciousness raising had become the vogue with religious workers, Miss Stafford sought to make Methodists aware of the plight of older adults being cut off from society and the possibilities of a full, active, joyful Christian life rooted in the church."

"When she came to the staff of the former Board of Education of The Methodist Church, her pioneer work involved motivating a concern for the elderly among church leaders, interpreting new knowledge from the emerging field of gerontology, and training volunteer persons in skills of working with older people. Resistance among church leaders was high, volunteers were hesitant, but the Stafford spirit was indomitable. Gradually the climate

changed toward acceptance of her work, and Virginia moved beyond conferences, institutes and assemblies to new frontiers.

"As knowledge of the aging process became more general, Miss Stafford pioneered in developing seminars in major universities — Drew, Duke, and others — where volunteer workers in annual conferences, local churches or homes for the aging could obtain information and training in much greater depth. Thus, initiated into the mainstream of continuing education, these volunteers were helped and supported as they moved into positions of leadership in the churches. Undergirded by the best insights and skills that were embodied in contemporary thinking, they were able to apply this learning to their leadership roles with sensitivity and vision....

"Miss Stafford recognized that the challenges of older adult work required the full cooperation of all denominations, as well as secular agencies, to cope with the complex needs of aging persons. So for years she labored arduously with interdenominational coalitions to generate concern for the elderly and to design programs that would not disengage older people from life. She worked hard to improve standards for agencies serving the homebound, the retired, and the hospitalized aged. In all of these relationships she was an advocate for new services to meet unfilled needs of the aging.

"Increasingly her professional contributions were recognized by church and state alike. She participated in advisory committees related to each White House Conference on Aging. She was an active advocate for the spiritual well-being of the aging.... The

invitation to participate in the meeting of the International Gerontological Congress at Kiev, USSR, in the summer of 1972 extended to Miss Stafford was a singular recognition of the world-wide eminence to which her work had risen. The illness that terminated her life on May 9, 1977, prevented her from making a presentation to the National Inter-faith Coalition on Aging on 'The Spiritual Well-being of the Aging.'"<sup>30</sup> Betty Letzig was asked to give the address in her place. The address was later published in *Spiritual Well Being of the Elderly*, edited by James A. Thomas and Thomas C. Cook, Jr. — a book dedicated to the memory of Virginia Stafford.

### HER INSIGHTS WILL GUIDE US

In 1953, Virginia Stafford authored the book, *Older Adults in the Church*.<sup>31</sup> The following excerpts from the book reveal something of her pioneering work. Forty years later, we are still talking about what she said then.

America is growing up! For the first time in our national history the United States is becoming a country of older people... In a nation that has prided [itself] on youth and vigor,... this is a crucial change indeed... In 1900, one person in twenty-five was sixty-five or older, in 1980 the proportion will be one in ten. At the beginning of the century there were three million people over sixty-five years of age. While the total population of the United States doubled during 1900-1950, the number of people over sixty-five more than quadrupled, to more than twelve and a quarter million. By early 1950 persons were arriving at the age of 65 at the average rate of 1096 per day.<sup>32</sup>

Virginia Stafford's work preceded the first National Conference on Aging held in Washington, D.C., in August 1950, the formation of such organizations as the National Council on Aging that same year, the International Gerontological Congress held in St. Louis in 1951, and the White House Conferences dating from 1961 forward.

Among these evidences that the nation is bestirring itself and coming out of its former lethargy with regard to its older citizens, is the fact that the church is likewise awakening. It has been slow in so doing: as slow almost as the society of which it is a part and whose characteristics it has all too often reflected. It has been slow indeed; but it is awake now and the needs of older people are becoming a major concern in its life.

The church at large is beginning to recognize that there are vast numbers of older persons in its membership that need the message of the Christian gospel. It is becoming aware of its indebtedness to them for the leadership, support, service and faith that have made the church of today possible. It is coming to see the tremendous potentialities in the lives of older adults for making the church and community better and for making their own lives more creative.<sup>33</sup>

In almost any church there are older adults in rather large proportion to the total membership. They have 'borne the brunt in the heat of the day' and loyally continued, as years have come and gone, to attend every service and activity possible.... The church needs the presence and ministry of older people. The wisdom of their experience through the years helps younger persons avoid needless mistakes.... The church is rich indeed that has a number of older persons actively engaged in its total program.<sup>34</sup>

Yet with all of that said, Virginia Stafford pointed out that "many older people come to find themselves outside a genuine, meaningful church fellowship and have sensed a real loneliness as a result.... Many an older person never had a vital relationship to any church.... Local church workers can be instruments in God's hands to bring these needy people into [the Christian] fellowship. Lives can be changed. New hope can be found."<sup>35</sup>

She was concerned with older adults as learners, saying that "learning is not a matter of the calendar. Any normal person can learn, grow, change, find solutions to problems and discover ways to meet felt needs. Whether a person is twenty or eighty, ten or sixty, it matters little."<sup>36</sup>

She was an early exponent of the older adult's need for fun and fellowship. She, together with Larry Eisenberg, wrote *More Fun for Older Adults* in 1967 — "a book of ideas and activities to put an extra measure of zest into the lives of older folks, both in groups and at home." In 1973, she published the manual, *Creative Activities for Older Adults*. She insisted that "our whole make-up requires a change of pace, different activities and interests. Our minds become unable to do their best without some relaxation.... We must have moments of fun and relaxation."<sup>37</sup>

Virginia Stafford gave strong emphasis to the older adult's sense of Christian vocation. What does one feel called upon to be and to do as a disciple of Christ at this stage of one's life? She claimed that "the years of older adulthood may well be either the most satisfying or the most unhappy of all! One's use

of time and energy can be the deciding factor.... Many older people have come to feel useless, 'on the shelf.' ... The happiest old person... is the one who is doing something to bring comfort and satisfaction to others" through service to the church, to families in the community, and to the community itself.<sup>38</sup>

Of singular importance was her insistence that "the spiritual streams of life seem to swell and flow more fully as life goes on... . There is time to think on truly important things" — time to study the Bible, to pray, to reach out in fellowship with others and share one's thoughts on God's constant care and love.<sup>39</sup>

She saw the need for a Director of Older Adults in the local church—someone who would be an advocate for older persons and older adult ministries.<sup>40</sup>

The pioneering work of Virginia Stafford did much to chart our way as we look to the future.

Following her at the General Board of Discipleship, Wayne Lindecker continued to conduct workshops and seminars on older adult ministries on the jurisdictional and annual conference levels. He also represented the Board on such national organizations as NICA (National Interfaith Coalition on Aging). Then, Chester E. Custer, following his retirement from the Board, became a part-time Director of Older Adult Ministries. Following him, Roy Ryan assumed the older adult portfolio and continued the work that had been in place before him. He served in this capacity for a brief period of time preceding his retirement. The most recent staff person with an older adult portfolio is Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. Continuing the work that had gone on prior to his arrival, he gives direction to the newly established Committee on Older Adult Ministries mandated by the 1992 General Conference, and which is responsible to the General Board of Discipleship.



## THE CONTRIBUTION OF PAUL MAVES

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**I** would hope that the church would confirm a commitment to minister to the needs, and use the resources, of persons of all ages, recognizing that needs change and persons have to deal with different types of challenges over their life span. Older persons need to assume more responsibility for the support and nurture of the younger generation. More attention needs to be given to the vocation of the elderly, on how they might be directed into ministry. We need to go beyond simply solving their problems and meeting their needs. I hope also that a coordinated referral center can be developed where persons can receive information they need with one call or letter.

Paul Maves,  
Professor, Author, Lecturer,  
Consultant on Older Adult Ministries

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Paul Maves has also been one of the pioneers in the older adult movement within The United Methodist Church. From 1946-1948, he served, along with J. Lennart Cedarleaf, as a research associate of the Department of Pastoral Services of the Federal Council of Churches in their study of "The Church's Ministry to Older Adults." Virginia Stafford was on his advisory committee. The New York Annual Conference of The Methodist Church Board of Education, headed by J. Gordon Chamberlain as executive director, also participated. One aim of the study was that of trying to get pastors more interested and involved in older adult ministry. Thirteen congregations in that conference were studied through interviews and observations.

In 1949, Paul Maves' Ph.D. degree from Drew University Theological School grew out of his work and experience with the Federal Council of Churches. The title of his dissertation was "The Christian Religious Education of Older Adults." His book, *Older People and the Church*, published in 1949 by Abingdon Press, a religious Book of the Month Club selection, was an outgrowth of his Federal Council of Churches study. Arrangements were made during the 1950s and early 1960s for him to lecture at many pastors' schools on the subject of his book. He said later concerning his doctoral study: "I suppose one could say that it was the leading of the Holy Spirit or an historical accident. But I discovered after I got into it that some of my best and closest friends were older people." His other books on older adults include *Christian Religious Education of Older Adults*, *The Best Is Yet to Be*, *Older Volunteers in Church and Community*, *A Place to Live in Your Later Years*, and *Faith for the Older Years*.

Dr. Maves was on the Committee that planned the organization of the National Council on the Aging in 1950; he served on its Board of Directors for six years. He helped to plan the first National Conference on Aging, held in Washington, D.C., in 1950.

Paul Maves and Virginia Stafford helped to design and lead three demonstration summer conferences for older adults at Mount Union College in Ohio, Westminster College in Maryland, and at the Lakeview United Methodist Camp in Palestine, Texas. They worked together in conducting two national three-week seminars on older adult ministries in the early 1950s — one at Drew and the other at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Annual conferences were encouraged to select pastors to attend those seminars which included in-training field trips. In 1970, he offered a course on "Ministry with the Aging" at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. He later offered courses in gerontology at Otterbein Home in Lebanon, Ohio. From 1986 until 1990, he taught two courses each year at United Theological Seminary.

One of the first, if not the first, jurisdictional Consultation on Older Adult Ministries was held by the Northeastern Jurisdiction at the Watson Center in Painted Point, New York, in 1977. Paul Maves, along with Charles Frazier and Betty Letzig, General Board of Global Ministries staff persons, and Bishop Joseph Yeakel, were among the leaders. Other jurisdictions soon followed, with the Southeastern Jurisdiction holding a major Convocation on Aging at Lake Junaluska in 1982. The South Central Jurisdiction has held several conferences for older adults at Mt. Sequoyah at Fayetteville, Arkansas. A large number of annual conferences hold yearly workshops

or conferences on aging. Some annual conferences have Committees on Aging.

From 1986-1988, Paul Maves was the Director of the Gerontology Center for Otterbein Home in Lebanon, Ohio, the purpose of the Center being to upgrade the quality of institutional long-term care, to provide education for health care professionals, nurses, social workers, administrators, and people in the field of social services.

### **THE SHEPHERD'S CENTER**

In 1969, Elbert C. Cole, with the perspective of a parish minister, had the dream of building a retirement home in Kansas City. "In 1971, a consultant reflected, 'Why, when the church wants to do something for older adults, do they build a retirement home?' The response to that comment resulted in the delay in perfecting plans for the retirement home and the creation of the concept of the Shepherd's Center which opened in July 1972." <sup>41</sup>

Paul Maves and Barbara Payne (associated with the Gerontology Center of Georgia State University), worked with Dr. Cole in setting up a training program for older adults in his congregation at Central United Methodist Church. Other churches of the area soon became involved, and before long it developed into an ecumenical enterprise. By 1986, "the original center in Kansas City served approximately 6000 people with a volunteer staff of over 400 older adults." <sup>42</sup> Elbert Cole, the recognized founder of the Shepherd's Center program, indicates that his vision of building a retirement home was eventually realized. Kingswood Manor is now a continuum care facility of The United Methodist Church with 350 residents.

"The Shepherd's Center story is simply a concept of linking older people together so that identified needs can be met and life sustained with meaning and dignity. The name was selected to reflect the supportive caring expressed in the Twenty-Third Psalm. The primary purpose of the Shepherd's Center is to help older people remain independent

in their own living situation as long as they choose. An equally important intention is to enrich the later years with opportunities for service to others, self-expression, meaningful work, and close friendships.

"The Shepherd's Center concept is an example of how churches and synagogues can work together in the community, enabling congregations to provide a comprehensive ministry so that total needs are met. All faiths share in the funding, program and service.

"The genius of the program is that it is a ministry of and with older people rather than a ministry to them. It draws on the lifetime skills and experiences of the participants, and it provides them a significant place in the community. It cooperates with but does not duplicate or compete with other programs or services of the aging network. It is privately funded by contributions from local congregations, participants and others in the community." <sup>43</sup>

The Harry F. Kendall Foundation provided funds and a working relationship with the Health and Welfare Ministries Division of the General Board of Global Ministries whereby Dr. Maves, as Director of the National Shepherd's Center Development Project, was able to share the Shepherd Center Program and philosophy with innumerable churches and communities across the country. From 1978-1983, his work was funded by the United Methodist Board of Hospitals and Homes.

In October 1992, there were over 320 United Methodist Churches involved with 90 Shepherd's Centers, serving approximately 70,000 persons. <sup>44</sup> A National Interfaith Advisory Council, with eleven major denominations represented, has been created for the Shepherd's Center. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. represents The United Methodist Church.

Elbert Cole's role in older adult work has been widely recognized. He served two terms as chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging for Missouri, and two terms on the Board of the National Council on Aging. He is presently serving on the board of the American Society on Aging.



## THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON AGING (1968-1984)

**D**o not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent." (Psalm 71:9, NRSV) The church has no alternative but to be an "advocate" for the aging. Society is said to be judged in light of how it cares for its most vulnerable members — the old and its young. The older adults in our church have the numbers, expertise and experience to change our society for the better so that no person need lack basic requirements of food, clothing, shelter and opportunity to make a constructive contribution to society. My hope is that older adults will recognize their potential and, guided by their Christian commitment, become advocates not only for themselves but for all members of our society. If we would, it could be said of us as it was said of the disciples, "those who turned the world upside down have come here, also."

Betty J. Letzig,  
General Board of Global Ministries:  
Organizer and Coordinator of  
The Ad Hoc Staff Committee on Aging

Prior to 1968, Interboard Committees of the church provided an opportunity for representatives of the various Boards and Agencies to discuss common concerns and objectives. The issue of aging was one such concern discussed. With the formation of The United Methodist Church in 1968, the Interboard Committees were eliminated. In light of that, Betty Letzig, who was the Executive Secretary for Health and Social Welfare Ministries of the National Division for the General Board of Global Ministries, and Grover Bagby, who was the Associate General Secretary for the Division of General Welfare of the General Board of Church and Society, discussed what could be done to keep the aging concerns of the church alive.

Betty Letzig and Grover Bagby invited the staff who carried responsibility for older adult ministries in the various Boards and Agencies, and the Woman's Division, to form an unofficial Ad Hoc Staff Committee on Aging. Representatives on the Ad Hoc Committee sought to coordinate their work and to discover what was or was not being done in and through the church by, with, and for older adults. They were convinced that the vast potential represented within the older adult constituency needed to be affirmed and utilized. The Ad Hoc Committee generally met when their representatives were brought together for other purposes.

It was the Ad Hoc Committee that began conceptualizing what the various responsibilities of our Boards and Agencies should be with regard to the church's involvement in a comprehensive older adult ministry. And it was within the Ad Hoc

Committee that the seeds for the National Consultation of Older Adults were planted.

Betty Letzig was instrumental in coordinating the efforts of the Ad Hoc Committee for several years. Later, in 1982, she represented The United Methodist Church, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, and the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA), at the World Assembly on Aging held in Vienna, Austria. She served as the president of NICA from 1981-1985. "Ms. Letzig became interested in the aging through older friends she made as a youth delivering milk for the family dairy. In the early '60s she spent a year in England in an exchange program, working primarily with older people and becoming acquainted with many services not then available in the United States that were offered to the elderly in England through that country's socialized medicine program." <sup>45</sup>

### THE STATEMENT ON AGING AND GENERAL CONFERENCE ACTION

It was within the Ad Hoc Committee that the "Study/Action Statement on Aging" had its origin. The first draft of the Statement was written by Grover Bagby. Through a process which resulted in the participation of the four major program boards, a committee refined the Statement that was officially adopted by the General Board of Global Ministries and the Committee on Adult Ministries of the General Board of Discipleship. This statement "calls

upon our society and the church at all levels to take those actions which will support and enhance the lives of older persons and use their talents for the common good of society and the special mission and ministry of the church.... The statement was the basis for an official resolution on Aging by the 1980 General Conference of The United Methodist Church." <sup>46</sup>

The updated summary of the "Statement on Aging" follows:

Life in the later years has caused older persons to ask two questions: How can life be maintained? What gives meaning and purpose to my life in these years? Both questions have religious implications. Concern for older persons in the church is theologically grounded in the doctrine of Creation, in the meaning of God's work in Christ, in the response to grace that leads us into service, in the continuing value of older persons in the larger mission, and in the nature of the church as an agent of redemption and defender of justice for all.

Older adults in the United States deserve respect dignity, and equal opportunity. The United Methodist Church is called to be an advocate for the elderly, for their sense of personal identity and dignity, for utilization of experience, wisdom and skills, for health maintenance, adequate income, educational opportunities, and vocational and avocational experiences in cooperation with the public and private sectors of society.

The graying of America implies also the graying of The United Methodist Church. The church, however, is called to be concerned, not only for its own, but also for all older people in our society.

As the aging process is part of God's plan for creation, with the good news of Christ's redemption giving hope and purpose to life, United Methodist people are called upon to translate this message through words and deeds in the church and in society. <sup>47</sup>

Other important statements on aging were developed during the era of the Ad Hoc Committee. A paragraph on the "Rights of the Aging" first appeared in the Social Principles in 1972. Updated, in 1992 it reads:

In a society that places primary emphasis upon youth, those growing old in years are frequently isolated from the mainstream of social existence. We support social policies that integrate the aging into the life of the

total community, including sufficient income, increased and non-discriminatory employment opportunities, educational and service opportunities, and adequate medical care and housing within existing communities. We urge social policies and programs, with emphasis on the unique concerns of older women and ethnic minority persons, that ensure to the aging the respect and dignity that is their right as senior members of the human community. Further, we urge increased consideration for adequate pension systems by employers with provisions for the surviving spouse. <sup>48</sup>

It was also during this same period that the 1980 *Book of Discipline* mandated:

The ministry of the local church shall include and be extended to persons sixty-five years of age and older. Such ministry shall seek to meet the needs of older adults and bring them into fellowship, ministry, and service of the local congregation. Such ministry shall be the responsibility of the Council on Ministries, working through its adult coordinator or older adult coordinator, if elected, or the Adult/Older Adult Council, if organized. A cooperative approach to older adult ministries with other churches, denominations, community organizations, and groups shall be encouraged as a valid outreach ministry of the local United Methodist Church.... Where the older adult ministries would be enhanced, an Older Adult Council may be organized. <sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, the 1980 General Conference stated that no conference or other organizational unit of the church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the church because of race, color, national origin, economic conditions, or age.

The Ad Hoc Committee remained in existence until 1984 when the General Conference approved the formation of a Task Force on Older Adult Ministries.

Those who served on the Ad Hoc Staff Committee at one time or another included Betty Letzig, Grover Bagby, Charles Frazier, Daisy Warren, Chiquita Smith, Miriam Chrisler, Kathy Nickerson, Mary Kercheval Short, Rosalie Bentzinger, Beverly Jackson, Al Murdock, Lynn Bergman, Wendell Bassett, and Wayne Lindecker.

## THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION OF OLDER ADULTS (1982)

**T**hree obvious facts that emerged from the discussion at Yahara have fueled my imagination and shaped my hopes and plans for the future of the older adult movement. (1) The need for "togetherness" as an antidote for loneliness. (2) The desire for a voice, for participation in the formation and plans and policies for this age group. (3) The conviction that the church will be stronger and its program more realistic if it listens to the experience and knowledge of those who have lived through so many and such troubles years. Power "gerontocracy" is not the object of these plans, but service and sharing.

John McLaughlin,  
Yahara Delegate; Member of  
The Task Force on Older Adult Ministries

During the era of the Ad Hoc Staff Committee on Aging, Charles Frazier, then with the Division of Health and Welfare of the General Board of Global Ministries, met with John and Iona McLaughlin in April 1982, to discuss the need for a consultation of older adults. That meeting in the living room of the McLaughlins set in motion the actual planning for such an event. They did not know at the time what the interest in such a consultation might be.

The Division of Health and Welfare had an emphasis on aging prior to the planning stage of the Consultation. The Women's Division and the National Division of the General Board of Global Ministries, the General Board of Church and Society, and the General Board of Discipleship added their support to the proposed Consultation.

### THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

In June 1982, Charles Frazier brought together a Planning Committee consisting of Thelma Baxter (Queens, NY), A. L. Eaton (Castle Creek, NY), Vivian Shepherd (Lenexa, KS), Elizabeth Welch (Winston-Salem, NC), and John and Iona McLaughlin (Gaithersburg, MD). Aware of the concerns of the Ad Hoc Staff Committee, they formulated a proposal for a consultation to be held at the Yahara Conference Center in Madison, Wisconsin, in the fall of 1982. Paul Maves was employed to aid in the design of the Consultation and to serve as the process coordinator of the event.

Approximately 100 prospective participants were nominated by Annual Conferences, Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups, General Program Agencies, and individuals. Forty-six older United Meth-

odists, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and from our northern border to the Gulf of Mexico, were brought together at Yahara. Participants represented all five jurisdictions, as well as urban, suburban, town and rural communities. There was Black, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American, and White representation. Twenty-seven of the participants were women, and 19 were men; 37 were laity and 9 were clergy. Ages ranged from 61 to 87, with an average age of 72. That National Consultation of Older Adults was the first of its kind. It was a milestone in our United Methodist history.

The Consultation<sup>50</sup> grew out of the recognition that persons 65 and over constituted a sizeable (at least 25 percent) and growing proportion of the membership of The United Methodist Church and yet they have often been under-represented, under-served, and under-utilized in their own church. At that time, 43 percent of the church's membership was 55 years of age or over. Negative attitudes toward aging, stereotypes of older people, and age-discriminatory practices were prevalent within the church and society. The time had come to facilitate our older members in conferring, speaking, and acting on their own behalf and thus being enabled to offer their gifts more fully to the mission and ministry of the church. In December 1981, another White House Conference on Aging sharpened the national focus on older persons in our society. In August 1982, the United Nations sponsored a first-ever World Assembly on Aging signalling the arrival of "Aging" as a global issue. The National Consultation of Older Adults provided a similar opportunity for The United Methodist Church to focus on and listen to its own older members.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

The purpose of the Consultation was defined as follows: "In order to expand and deepen the awareness of the total membership of The United Methodist Church to the needs and potential of its older members, a National Consultation of Older Adults will be held in which a representative group of United Methodists will:

1. Identify issues and concerns of major importance to them.
2. Determine the role and responsibility they wish to assume in representing these issues and concerns in the life of The United Methodist Church.
3. Develop specific recommendations and strategies for implementation.

The primary focus of the Consultation was on those issues affecting the life of older persons in The United Methodist Church and on those societal concerns which the church can affect.

The Consultation took the following actions:

1. Made it clear that in its statements, conclusions and recommendations, the Consultation spoke only for itself.
2. Received working papers from eight strategy/planning groups organized around identified concerns.
3. Elected a Continuing Advisory Committee of nine persons to combine the eight working papers into one document and establish a procedure for submitting this document to participants for final approval.
4. Directed the Continuing Advisory Committee to pursue all wise and necessary actions to achieve the goals of the Consultation, including recommendations to the General Conference for Disciplinary changes.
5. Adopted a "Message to The United Methodist Church."
6. Affirmed the "Statement on Aging" developed through the Ad Hoc Committee on Aging.
7. Adopted nine objectives for implementation:
  - (a) Educate persons of all ages for the life-long process of aging with emphasis on quality of life, intergenerational understanding, and personal spiritual growth.
  - (b) Utilize the special gifts, skills and experiences of older persons in the transmission of our faith heritage, the nurture of

Christian community, and the mission of the church in the world.

- (c) Identify and strengthen an intentional and coordinated ministry by, with and for older persons at all levels of The United Methodist Church.
- (d) Encourage and assist local churches in developing support ministries with older persons, with particular attention to those who have special needs.
- (e) Train clergy and laity (in local churches, seminaries, and the church at large) for a broadened, intentional ministry with and by older persons.
- (f) Train and equip older persons for new and continuing roles as leaders and/or consultants in the ministry and mission of the church.
- (g) Encourage church structures and its membership to establish linkages with other churches and public and private community agencies in support of more comprehensive and effective policies and programs that will enhance the quality of life for older persons.
- (h) Emphasize the unique concerns and needs of some older women and ethnic minority persons as matters of great importance in implementing these objectives.
- (i) Propose and encourage consideration of appropriate action by general agencies and other church structures, including annual conferences, of disciplinary provisions which will implement these objectives.

## THE CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

Marian B. Alton,	Madison, WI
Ralph T. Alton,	Madison, WI
Thelma Baxter,	Cambria Heights, NY
Lloyd M. Bertholf,	Bloomington, IL
Martha W. Bertholf,	Bloomington, IL
Stanley M. Buck,	Grand Rapids, MI
L. E. Crowson,	Moorefield, WV
Aline P. Crowson,	Moorefield, WV
Alice S. Detwiler,	Ocean City, NJ
A. L. Eaton,	Castle Creek, NY
Ramona D. Edwards,	Sebring, FL
Frances Ellis,	Paris, TX
Frank Field,	Banquete, TX
Harold W. Flowers,	Pine Bluff, AR

Harriet Griffin,	Fort Worth, TX
C. R. Hager,	Wilmore, KY
C. C. Herbert,	Charlotte, NC
Libba Herbert,	Charlotte, NC
Lillian Holliday,	Philadelphia, PA
Amos O. Holmes,	Dublin, GA
Antonio G. Jimenez, Jr.,	Albuquerque, NM
Vera E. Johnson,	Birmingham, AL
Kearney Kirkby,	South Lyon, MI
Pearl Smith Kyte,	Fairmont, WV
Neva Martin,	Rochester, NY
Kenneth K. Mayeda,	Fresno, CA
William H. Millett,	Warrington, PA
Edna W. Moss,	Danville, KY
Hilda McIntosh,	Kansas City, KS
Iona J. McLaughlin,	Gaithersburg, MD
John R. McLaughlin,	Gaithersburg, MD
Lillian Phinney,	Lapwai, ID
Elizabeth Prather,	Maryville, TN
Rosita L. Rayburn,	Espanola, NM
Eleanor L. Richardson,	Decatur, GA
Vivian Davis Shepherd,	Lenexa, KS
Arthur Siegle,	Hayesville, NC
Mattie Siegle,	Hayesville, NC
Donald M. Typer,	Mount Vernon, IA
Esther Typer,	Mount Vernon, IA
Gilpin Carrie Walker,	Washington, D.C.
Nina A. Washburn,	Reno, NV
Wallace F. Watt,	Lansing, MI
Elizabeth Welch,	Winston-Salem, NC
Harold Whiteside,	Joliet, IL
Matilda Saxon Winn,	Trenton, NJ

**Facilitator:**

Paul B. Maves,  
National Shepherds Center,  
Development Project

**Reflector:**

James T. Sykes, Director of Public Service,  
The Wisconsin Cheeseman

**Press:**

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**Secretary/Registrar:**

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**Staff Coordinator:**

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**Listeners/Resource Persons:**

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Miriam Chrisler,  
Women's Division  
Vivian Collins,  
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John A. Murdock,  
Health & Welfare Ministries Division  
Josephine Price,  
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Chiquita Smith,  
Women's Division  
Philap Susag,  
Health & Welfare Ministries Division  
Olga G. Tafolla,  
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**GENERAL BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP**

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Director of Adult Ministries  
Daisy D. Warren,  
Editor of *Mature Years*

**GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

A. L. Eaton,  
Department of Human Welfare  
Beverly Jackson,  
Department of Human Welfare

**OTHERS**

Marge Engelman,  
University of Wisconsin Extension  
Glenn S. Gothard,  
Nashville, TN



## THE CONTINUING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**I** am concerned that older adults not be given **preferential treatment**, which amounts to ageism. A patronizing attitude is difficult to live with, as is discrimination. Older persons, along with those of any age, should be treated with dignity and respect. The experience, wisdom and skills they have accumulated over the years should be utilized in their own right, just as such qualities should be recognized and used in others. Older persons do not want to be by-passed, but neither do they want to be "set apart" and given the impression that somehow age has made them different from others.

L. E. Crowson,  
Yahara Delegate; Chairperson of the  
Continuing Advisory Committee

A Continuing Advisory Committee was formed to guide the work of the Consultation and to bridge the gap between the Yahara event and the 1984 General Conference. The recommendations and strategies adopted by the Consultation were correlated by the Committee and sent to the sponsors of the Consultation, the Council of Bishops, the General Council on Ministries, the annual conferences and local churches.

This Committee, was comprised of :

Bishop Ralph T. Alton (Madison, WI);  
L. E. Crowson (Moorefield, WV), Chair  
Eleanor L. Richardson (Decatur, GA), Vice-Chair  
William H. Millett (Warrington, PA), Secretary  
Thelma Baxter (Queens, NY)  
Vivian Davis Shepherd (Lenexa, KS)  
Antonio G. Jimenez, Jr. (Albuquerque, NM)  
Elizabeth Welch (Winston-Salem, NC)  
John R. McLaughlin (Gaithersburg, MD).

The Continuing Advisory Committee prepared the legislation for the creation of a Task Force on Older Adult Ministries that came into existence in 1984. It also endorsed a resolution that originated with the Kentucky Annual Conference calling for a

Coordinator of Older Adult Ministries at the general church level. The General Conference was asked to mandate such a position in every local church, district and annual conference. The Committee also actively supported a resolution on aging that the General Board of Global Ministries submitted to General Conference. That statement called for a study by the church of the conditions and needs of aging persons to enable their full participation in society at all levels. Paul Maves was the Special Consultant and Charles E. Frazier was the Staff Coordinator for the Continuing Advisory Committee.

Numerous changes and additions related to older adults have occurred in *The Book of Discipline* and *The Book of Resolutions*, largely as a result of the Yahara Consultation. In 1984 alone there were twenty-three such changes. The Yahara philosophy is reflected in the statement: "A ministry by, with, and for older adults shall serve the twofold purpose of meeting the needs of such persons in the church and community and recognizing the valuable contribution they can make to the ministry and mission of the church in the community and world. Older adults in the church shall be recognized as full participants in the fellowship, ministry and service of the congregation." <sup>51</sup>

[illegible]

<p>1. The first part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.</p> <p>2. It then goes on to describe the various methods used to collect and analyze data.</p> <p>3. The next section details the results of the study, showing a clear trend towards increased efficiency.</p> <p>4. Finally, the report concludes with a series of recommendations for future research and implementation.</p>	<p>1. The first part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.</p> <p>2. It then goes on to describe the various methods used to collect and analyze data.</p> <p>3. The next section details the results of the study, showing a clear trend towards increased efficiency.</p> <p>4. Finally, the report concludes with a series of recommendations for future research and implementation.</p>	<p>1. The first part of the report discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions.</p> <p>2. It then goes on to describe the various methods used to collect and analyze data.</p> <p>3. The next section details the results of the study, showing a clear trend towards increased efficiency.</p> <p>4. Finally, the report concludes with a series of recommendations for future research and implementation.</p>
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## OLDER WOMEN AND THE CHURCH

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**I** hope that older adult ministries will always be an important and integrated part of every program and structure of the church, and that older adults will be recognized for their experience and desire to serve (and not to "boss"). Older persons need to be involved in planning programs and ministries for their own age group. Our church agencies need to collaborate in developing for the local church a comprehensive older adult ministry that includes an intergenerational emphasis, and avoid setting apart age groups.

Eleanor Richardson,  
Yahara Delegate; Member of The Task Force;  
The Advisory/Coordinating Committee; and  
The Committee on Older Adult Ministries

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The important role of women in the church has had a long and honorable history, dating back to biblical times. Each of the denominations that came together to form The United Methodist Church had its own women's work and organization.

Within our Methodist tradition, the Woman's Home Missionary Society recognized the importance of providing for their missionaries and deaconesses as early as 1896. Two such facilities, the Bancroft Home in Ocean Grove, New Jersey, and a home in Robincroft, California, both now closed, were incorporated into the Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville, North Carolina — a home referred to as a "little United Nations."

Some of the pioneering work done by the Women's Division relative to older adults included urban and rural ministries, community centers, and programs for the elderly. This phase of their work included the concerns of ethnic and racially oppressed people.

Our "Social Principles" state: "We urge social policies and programs, with emphasis on the unique concerns of older women and ethnic persons, that ensure to the aging the respect and dignity that is their right as senior members of the human community. Furthermore, we urge increased consideration for adequate pension systems by employers with provisions for the surviving spouse."<sup>52</sup>

### OLDER WOMEN WITHIN THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Our older population includes a disproportionate number of women (148 women to 100 men). Two-thirds of our population in the United States who are over 75 years of age are women. Older

women are more likely than men to be living alone. "The median annual income for older men in 1984 was \$10,000, for women about \$6,000, only \$1,000 above the official poverty level. It is not surprising that 72 percent of the elderly poor are women."<sup>53</sup> Older minority women are more likely to be poor. "Only 10 percent of women over 65 receive pension benefits, and 52 percent of widows expend the insurance death benefit within eighteen months of the spouse's death. Eighty-five percent of adult women will live alone within their lifetime."<sup>54</sup>

The situation facing older women living in rural communities is highlighted in our *Book of Resolutions*. "More than one-third of U.S. residents over 65 years old live in rural areas. For these persons, the problems of poverty, housing, isolation, and transportation are interrelated. Transportation to medical and social service centers cannot be found or costs too much. "Historically, women played key roles in developing the rural community and economy. Rural women are now involved in every aspect of their community and economic life, but like their urban sisters continue to suffer from inequalities in the job market, in social service delivery, and in legal matters. Poverty is a stark reality.

"Among older women who live alone, 82 percent are poor."<sup>55</sup>

In 1992, fifty-nine percent of the women in The United Methodist Church were over 60 years of age.<sup>56</sup>

### THE WOMEN'S DIVISION RESPONDS

These factors led the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church to conduct a survey of local members and national organizations in 1983.<sup>57</sup>

Prior to that, the Women's Division had been involved with issues affecting older women in the Displaced Homemakers Alliance, the Older Women's League, the U.N. World Assembly on Aging, held in Vienna in 1982, and the White House Mini-Conference on Aging. They promoted legislation to influence public policy on Social Security, employment and pension rights; they supported legislation on the "Economic Justice for Women: Retirement Income;" and they provided grants to various groups for their work with older women.

The Special Project on Older Women developed as a result of interest among United Methodist Women in efforts aimed particularly at justice for older women. Confronted with two trends, (1) the growing number of older persons in our society, and (2) the growing number of women in poverty, the Women's Division determined that its efforts could be enhanced by knowing more about the interests and needs of its own older membership age 55 and over, as well as what other national organizations were doing on behalf of older women.

The survey revealed that while a great deal of activity was taking place for, or on behalf of, older people generally, very little was targeted specifically to older women.

This representative survey consisted of three phases: (1) the mail return survey; (2) the follow-up telephone survey; and (3) personal interviews.

### PHASE 1

Two thousand questionnaires were mailed to 500 randomly selected local presidents of United Methodist Women across the country. Each president received four questionnaires to be distributed equally between members 55-70, and members over 70. Approximately 500 were returned. Efforts were made to include racial/ethnic minorities. Six percent of the respondents were minority women. The survey was available in English and Spanish.

From the 500 responses, the survey indicated that:

- 56% were currently married
- 36% were widowed
- 30% lived alone
- 4% were single
- 52% had attended college
- 28% were college graduates
- 10% had income below \$5,000
- 27% had income over \$20,000
- 88% owned their own home
- Their median annual income was between \$10,000 and \$15,000

- About 90% had some form of medical insurance coverage
- 68% reported no illness during the past six months
- 32% had physical limitations
- 75% said someone would provide care for them as long as needed
- 50% of those who indicated long term care is available to them said the caregiver would be the husband
- 5% said they had no one to help care for them
- Nearly 50% indicated feeling depressed or very unhappy at times
- The average length of membership in United Methodist Women was 27 years
- 77% had attended local unit meetings within the past six months
- 66% presently held office in United Methodist Women
- 88% were past or current officers
- 39% volunteered their services to some activity within the past five years
- 18% expressed a desire to volunteer their time to some activity
- 45% said the local church provided volunteer opportunities for older adults

Over 50 percent of the respondents expressed support for the United Methodist Women's involvement in the following issues, in order of priority:

1. hunger
2. child abuse
3. concerns of older women
4. battered women
5. organized visiting/phoning the elderly
6. adequate housing for the elderly
7. long-term care of aging relatives
8. racial justice
9. respite care
10. Meals-on-Wheels
11. Social Security's "inequities for women"
12. refugees

Overall, the respondent group appeared to be healthier, more educated, and more independent than would be anticipated in a national sample. They seemed to feel that they had sufficient financial resources to meet emergencies, possibly due to the high medical coverage reported. There was a strong expression that United Methodist Women should be involved both locally and nationally in a number of areas affecting the elderly.

## PHASE 2

Nearly 150 participants were interviewed by telephone. They expressed an extraordinarily high knowledge about the public services for senior citizens available in their home area. Their concerns and suggestions included: special or better transportation systems for seniors; community outreach programs; legal aid; adult day care services; personal outreach programs; volunteer programs such as Foster Grandparents; and Meals-on-Wheels. Several stressed the need for a phone call program for shut-ins to be coordinated, especially for those who are not church-goers or members.

Of those who had lost their spouses, almost none appeared to be "emotional widows" but were maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle. Almost all described themselves as being in good health relative to their peers, even when they themselves had been recently ill. Major worries focused on finances, problems of children and grandchildren, fears of illness, medical expenses, and occasionally about death itself. A number felt a major effort needed to be made to survey and address the needs of younger women in The United Methodist Church.

## PHASE 3

Personal interviews were conducted among United Methodist Women in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. The thirty-one women interviewed had the opportunity to communicate directly with the national leadership. Their recommendations included:

1. Assistance on how better to organize and promote local units
2. Raising the pastor's consciousness about the purpose of United Methodist Women
3. Developing a program to contact non-resident members
4. Developing a recruitment program aimed at younger women
5. Identifying volunteer opportunities for members
6. Providing tape-recorded sermons to shut-ins
7. Developing an oral history project

## OTHER MINISTRIES RELATED TO OLDER WOMEN

The United Methodist Women in the local church are in the forefront of carrying out a multitude of ministries with and to others. Ellen Kirby, Assistant

General Secretary, and Mary Kercheval Short, Executive Secretary for Women's Concerns, have been especially instrumental in giving leadership to the older women's emphasis within the Women's Division. Several programs within the Women's Division, in addition to the survey, have a focus on, or are inclusive of, older women.

1. A "Committee on Women's Concerns" deals with the issues of health care, aging and ageism. A Consultation on Older Women is in the planning stage.
2. Regional schools are conducted on the theme, "Women Planning for the Future." While women of all ages are included, thought is given to the older woman.
3. "Women and Financial Planning" workshops are conducted within annual conferences. A workbook and video accompany the program to help women raise the necessary questions they must face.
4. A deferred giving program sponsored by the General Board of Global Ministries enables the Division to extend its work to older women, as well as to others. An audio-cassette of selections from *Response* magazine is made available.
5. The Supportive Community program, one of four mission emphases, expresses concern for older women in the community and aims at helping them realize their fullest potential.
6. National Mission institutions are continually being upgraded to comply with the American Disability Act, thus assuring accessibility to property.
7. A Reading Program, modeled after a pattern used in the Evangelical United Brethren Church at the time of union in 1968, includes titles and concerns about aging and older adults. (A Catalog is available from The Service Center, General Board of Global Ministries, 7820 Reading Road/Caller No. 1800, Cincinnati, Ohio 45222-1800.)
8. In 1986-1987, United Methodist Women had a special emphasis on "Women: Planning for the Future," which trained women throughout the church to cope with personal and family concerns associated with aging.
9. Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, an institution and program related to the Women's Division, is deeply involved with older adult interests. A seminar on "Ethical Aspects of Aging Policy" was held in 1990. In October 1991, a United Methodist Week for Older Adult Ministries, coordinated by Richard Gentzler, Jr., and the Center, brought together leaders in older adult ministries for a week of intensive training. A second Week was held October 19-23, 1992, and a third event is planned for October 25-29, 1993. In 1992, alone, seven Elder Hostel programs were held on the campus.

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

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2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the work.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves identifying the resources needed, the tasks to be completed, and the timeline for the project.

4. After the plan is developed, the next step is to implement the plan. This involves carrying out the tasks and activities that have been identified in the plan.

5. Finally, the last step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves assessing whether the objectives and goals have been achieved and identifying any lessons learned for future projects.

[illegible]

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a message of condolence to the people of the State of California, who have been afflicted by a severe drought. The President expresses his sympathy for the suffering and his hope that the Congress will take prompt action to relieve the distress.

[illegible]

the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase by 1.2 billion, from 1.1 billion in 1990 to 2.3 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 1.1 billion, from 0.4 billion in 1990 to 1.5 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 15-64 is expected to increase by 1.1 billion, from 1.1 billion in 1990 to 2.2 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 1.1 billion, from 0.4 billion in 1990 to 1.5 billion in 2010. The number of people aged 15-64 is expected to increase by 1.1 billion, from 1.1 billion in 1990 to 2.2 billion in 2010.

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5. Finally, the last step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves assessing the progress made, the quality of the work, and the overall impact of the project.

## THE TASK FORCE ON OLDER ADULT MINISTRIES (1984 - 1988)

**O**lder Adult Ministries in The United Methodist Church will become more intentional, more focused, more creative, and more older adult-directed in the years ahead. At the same time, these ministries will become more diverse, more multi-generational, more missional, and more ecumenical than ever. The local church will provide the base of operation. Increasingly local churches will seek staff members with special training and skills in older adult ministries—many will be older adults themselves. Older adults will see themselves as “pilgrims” on a lifetime quest for self-actualization as the older children of God. They will see themselves as “sharers” of the “God News” every day and everywhere.

J. William (Bill) Carroll,  
Chairperson of The Task Force on  
Older Adult Ministries

The Task Force on Older Adult Ministries had its inception in the Consultation held at Yahara in 1982. Following Yahara, the Ad Hoc Committee continued to carry on its work. A group visited each general program agency to discuss its role in responding to older adult issues. At that time, minimum attention was being given to this area of work, with little coordination and sharing of ideas and resources. The 1984 General Conference, acting on a recommendation from the Yahara Consultation, approved the creation of a Task Force on Older Adult Ministries in the United States and Puerto Rico.<sup>58</sup> The Task Force was to “study, assess and recommend programs of ministry with, by and for older adults,” to “review current structures of the denomination, paying particular attention to women and racial ethnic minority older persons,” and “to pay attention to implementing the objectives from the Consultation at Yahara.” It was to be accountable to the General Council on Ministries and to report to the 1988 General Conference.<sup>59</sup>

In 1985, the General Council on Ministries (GCOM) circulated a questionnaire among the Boards and Agencies asking them to define their responsibility for a ministry by, with and for older adults, as mandated by the 1984 General Conference. GCOM worked to ensure and to coordinate a ministry to all people (e.g., older adults, women, various racial/ethnic minority groups). They participated with other agencies in raising the awareness of the special needs and concerns of older adults.

Dr. Trudie Kibbe Preciphs, the General Council on Ministries administrative staff representative, arranged for and coordinated the first meeting of the full Task Force that was held in Atlanta in February

1985. That meeting, which was racially inclusive, was convened by Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald and called together a group of 28 persons who were nominated by the College of Bishops and the general agencies. As directed, over half the members were 65 years of age or older. A quadrennial budget of \$235,000, with 75 percent from the General Board of Global Ministries, and 25 percent from the General Board of Discipleship provided funds for the work of the Task Force.

### GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT OLDER ADULTS

The Task Force gave direction to the church's older adult ministries during the 1984-1988 quadrennium. It gave considerable attention to empowering older persons for mission and ministry. The Task Force developed a comprehensive plan to guide its work by gathering data based on a wide sampling of an older adult constituency. Information was gathered from:

1. United Methodist retirement homes.
2. All United Methodist General Agencies, and the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries that focused on the concerns of older women and racial/ethnic minority women.
3. The Annual Conference Councils on Ministries, along with individual Annual Conference surveys.
4. Hearings within each jurisdiction, and in Puerto Rico.
5. United Methodist Ethnic Minority Caucuses,

including the 1985-1988 Quadrennial Missional Priority Coordinating Committee, along with hearings with racial/ethnic minority older adults.

6. The World Methodist Council that focused on issues related to older persons within the global context.
7. Other denominations, demographic studies, and retired clergy.
8. Participants in the 1982 Yahara Consultation.

The Task Force discovered "a vast untapped potential among older adults in the church and an urgent need for coordination of available resources and programs."<sup>60</sup> It recognized that for at least two quadrennia the Ad Hoc Committee had been struggling with the task of coordinating and monitoring programs involving older adults, and that a broader-based and more effective means of achieving those objectives was required.<sup>61</sup>

Research highlights submitted to the 1988 General Conference reinforced the growing awareness that the membership of the church was made up of a rapidly increasing number of older adults. Results from a commissioned study by the General Board of Discipleship, for the first time, provided data on the number, distribution, and characteristics of older adults in The United Methodist Church.<sup>62</sup>

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A MODEL MINISTRY**

The document, "Characteristics of a Model Ministry by, with, and for Older Persons in a Local Congregation," written by Dr. Paul Maves for the Task Force, was also included in the report to the 1988 General Conference, and was widely distributed throughout the church. It was a self-evaluation instrument and checklist to be used within a congregation to determine what was currently being done, as well as areas of ministries to be considered for the future. Ten characteristics formed the basis of the Model Ministry:

1. It is intentional
2. It empowers older persons for life and ministry
3. It is free from barriers to participation
4. It reaches out to older persons
5. The concerns of aging are included in the liturgy
6. It provides opportunities for continuing personal growth
7. It provides opportunities for companionship and socialization
8. It is intergenerational

9. It is community-minded and ecumenical
10. It addresses social policies and issues.

### **PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARDS AND AGENCIES**

The unofficial Ad Hoc Staff Committee had taken a comprehensive look at older adult ministry, but it was in 1988 that the Task Force made recommendations to the General Conference regarding the priorities of the program boards, based on the General Conference "Statement on Aging" and the recommendations of the 1982 National Consultation of Older Adults. With older adult ministry being multifaceted, each program board had a contribution to make in providing a comprehensive approach to this growing need. It was recommended that the following priorities be given attention by:

#### **THE GENERAL BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP**

1. Development of study materials of special concern related to older adults as well as intergenerational groups.
2. Continue the development of guidelines for the Council on Ministries/Administrative Council and the Adult Ministries work area which significantly address issues and needs for ministry by, with, and for older adults in local congregations.
3. Identify models for the continuing development of lay leadership in older adult years.
4. Continue and increase the involvement and training of all older lay persons, especially racial and ethnic minority older persons in all programs.
5. Continue to develop models and institute retirement education and planning for adults of all ages, recognizing the unique needs and resources of women and racial and ethnic minority persons in these models.
6. Promote the use of the document "Characteristics of a Model Ministry by, with, and for Older Persons in a Local Congregation" in local church leadership development events and resources.

#### **THE GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY**

1. Continue and increase the involvement and training of racial and ethnic minority older adults in all events and resources.
2. Promote opportunities for continuing education and lifelong learning in all

institutions of higher education, especially those affiliated with The United Methodist Church.

3. Provide resources and events to support annual conferences in retirement planning with clergy and lay church staff persons, recognizing the unique needs of and resources for women and racial and ethnic minority persons in their design.

4. Encourage development of, including funding for, the active study of older adult ministries and gerontology in all theological education programs developed for The United Methodist Church.

5. Include retired clergy and diaconal ministers in the planning of continuing education events and resources with currently appointed clergy and diaconal ministers.

### **THE GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

1. Continue and encourage the inclusion of older adults in mission education and outreach.
2. Identify and support effective models for older adult ministry in urban and rural settings, large and small membership churches, and among racial and ethnic minority groups.
3. Develop a special volunteer-in-mission placement program for older adults.
4. Support the involvement of older adults in education and action on national and international affairs.
5. Plan and implement programs which significantly include racial and ethnic minority older persons.
6. Initiate consultations with churches in other countries to identify concerns and needs of older persons, with follow-up outreach and ministry.
7. Include residents of United Methodist-related retirement homes in decision making on programs affecting such residents.

### **THE GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

1. Monitor and support appropriate civil legislation at all levels which implements the objectives and goals of the General Conference regarding the rights of older adults.
2. Develop a network of older adult advocates for public policy issues.
3. Plan and implement programs and resources which significantly include racial and ethnic minority older persons.

4. Support the involvement of older adults in education and action on national and international affairs.

### **A BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT**

Older adult ministry was placed within a biblical and theological framework with the following statement developed by the Task Force.

Aging is a life-long process from birth to death that encompasses the whole span of life, and not merely that of its final stages. Our understanding of older adulthood rests on a theological grounding that is a creed of faith applicable to all other stages of our lives. The God of our Christian pilgrimage is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

As United Methodists, we join other Christians in affirming that God is our Creator (Genesis 1:26), the Giver of life, who calls us into a divine-human fellowship, and who continually challenges us to new possibilities. We believe that we are under the providential care of the Eternal from birth to death.

We affirm our faith in Jesus Christ who makes all things new, and who comes to bring life and hope (John 10:10) to persons of all ages on their continuing pilgrimage of faith. The grace we experience through faith in Christ is the source of self-transcendence in the successive stages of our lives.

We affirm our belief in the Holy Spirit as God's presence with us for comfort, guidance and strength. Confident of the Divine Presence in our lives, we are called to face the gains and losses of advancing years as opportunities for spiritual understanding and growth.

Conscious of God's redemptive love in our own lives, we dare to stand with others, not only in their strength, but in their weakness, failure and sin. We believe that we are called to be present with others, including older persons with special interests and needs, and to reach out in love and in caring relationships to them.

We would capture a vision of God's promised reign — the rule of peace, justice and grace for our lives and for our world. We believe the faithful are called to the prophetic witness to "preach good news" to persons in all stations of life, to "work tirelessly for the

freedom of all persons to meet their fullest potential, and to liberate those who are captive to discrimination, neglect, exploitation, abuse and poverty."<sup>63</sup> Older adults should have the opportunity to give fully of themselves in making our communities and world more loving and just. Furthermore, we believe the Church as the Body of Christ is called to reconcile people of all ages to one another and to God. Older adults, no less than others, are called to be agents of reconciliation.

Responsive to their Christian vocation, older adults have gifts and graces, experience and skills to share in the transmission of our faith heritage, and in their response to the mission to which God calls them and the Church. Like others, older adults are not simply to be served, but to serve. The Church is called to respond to the needs of older persons, to call forth their creative powers, to address their longing for wholeness in all of life's relationships, and to support them in the critical hours of loneliness, illness and death.

We believe that older adults must have the opportunity to reaffirm their faith and commitment to Christ and the Church at this significant period in their lives, to be nurtured in the faith, and to rejoice in the Christian hope. We also believe that is imperative that older adults have a voice in planning ministries and in forming policies related to their own age group. We join them, and one another, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death, and face the future with the assurance that God is with us. Thanks be to God!

## **OTHER OLDER ADULT INVOLVEMENTS**

About 50 United Methodists, including some members of the Task Force, took part in the National Conference for the Empowerment of Older Americans for Neighborhood and Community Revitalization. The Conference, held May 9-11, 1986, was sponsored by the Washington (Episcopal) Cathedral College of the Laity, in cooperation with 15 other organizations. This was only one of several events involving United Methodist participation. Of special significance is the large number of participants attending jurisdictional and annual conference events planned around older adults concerns. The church has had a long-term relationship with such organizations as the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA) of which Betty Letzig served for a time as president. Through NICA, the church has had a

relationship to what began as the Western Gerontological Society and is now the American Association of Aging. Because of the work done through NICA, there is now a Section on Religion and Aging in the American Association. The church has also had a long-term relationship with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) of which Wayne Lindecker served as a volunteer consultant.

## **THE TASK FORCE AND ITS MEMBERSHIP**

The Task Force met twice in 1985: (at Atlanta, GA, Feb. 12-14, and at Dallas, TX, Dec. 13-14); once in 1986: (at Lake Junaluska, N.C., Aug. 22-23); and twice in 1987: (at Dayton, OH, Mar. 7-9, and at San Juan, PR, Oct. 22-24). Several committees were formed to meet between the sessions in order to accomplish their assigned responsibilities. Dr. Trudie Kibbe Preciphs of the General Council on Ministries served as the Administration/Staff representative; J. William (Bill) Carroll was Chairperson of the Task Force; and Iona McLaughlin was the Vice-Chairperson. The membership of the Task Force included:

Verda Aegerter (Minnesota Conference, NCJ)  
 J. William Carroll (North Mississippi Conference, SEJ)  
 Benjamin Costales (Rio Grande Conference, SCJ)  
 L. E. Crowson (West Virginia Conference, NEJ)  
 Antonio Escareño (General Commission on Religion & Race)  
 Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald (General Council on Ministries)  
 C. R. Hager (Kentucky Conference, SEJ)  
 Ann Hammons (General Commission on Christian Unity & Interreligious Concerns)  
 Royce Hardaway (North Texas Conference, SCJ)  
 James Hardcastle (Peninsula Conference, NEJ)  
 Avenell Elliot Harms (General Board of Church and Society)  
 Mattie Henderson (West Ohio Conference, NCJ)  
 Gladys Houston (Desert Southwest Conference, WJ)  
 Albert Jones (General Commission on the Status and Role of Women)  
 Iona McLaughlin (Northern New Jersey Conference, NEJ)  
 Thomas Mallonee (General Board of Discipleship)  
 William Millett (Western North Carolina Conference, SEJ)  
 Floyd Pierce (California-Nevada Conference, WJ)  
 Robert Pinezaddleby (Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, SCJ)  
 Eleanor Richardson (North Georgia Conference, SEJ)



George Schurman (General Board of Higher  
Education & Ministry)

Roberta Sugden (United Methodist  
Communications)

Julia Torres (Puerto Rico Conference (NEJ))

Elizabeth Welch (Western North Carolina  
Conference (SEJ))

Frank Williams (General Board of Global  
Ministries)

Ernest Wilson (Oregon-Idaho Conference, WJ)

Harry Young (Iowa Conference, NCJ)

**Resource Staff:**

Neil Alexander & Chester E. Custer (General  
Board of Discipleship)

Susanne Paul & Cathie Lyons (General  
Board of Global Ministries, Health and  
Welfare Ministries)

**Liaisons:**

Warren Hartman (General Board of  
Discipleship: Research)

John McLaughlin (World Methodist Council:  
Overseas' Conference)

David Reed (United Methodist Association  
of Health and Welfare Ministries)

**Consultants:**

Paul Maves

Carolyn Minus

**Publicity:**

Patricia Broughton

**Press:**

Frances Smith



## SEMINARY TRAINING FOR OLDER ADULT MINISTRY

**O**lder adult ministries in The United Methodist Church will assume a place of continuing importance into the twenty-first century. Our seminaries are responsible for preparing our future leaders who will be ministering to all of God's people. My hope is that the church will take full advantage of the knowledge, skills and experiences of its older adults — those who have supported and led the church, but who through the aging process have oftentimes been excluded.

*I envision within the General Board of Discipleship a Division of Older Adult Ministries that will include older persons in staff-level positions. I also envision the churches and institutions within the jurisdictions validating and implementing the legislation of the church, making full use of older adults.*

Richard E. Stewart,  
General Board of Higher Education & Ministry  
Representative: The Committee on  
Older Adult Ministries

In 1974-1976 the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA), representing 30 Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish religious bodies, conducted a project known as Gerontology in Seminary Training (GIST) "to encourage seminaries to include more aging content into seminary training." The GIST survey was supported by a grant from the Administration on Aging. In 1976, several training events were held to which seminary representatives were invited. "Faculty members from forty seminaries who participated in the GIST program developed projects dealing with gerontology and ministry." Most of our United Methodist seminaries were represented. A follow-up event was held the next year at which time the seminaries reported what they planned to do. The NICA study was updated a decade later with a national survey of 153 accredited seminaries in the United States.<sup>64</sup>

One of the objectives of the National Consultation of Older Adults that met at Yahara in 1982, was to "train clergy and laity (in local churches, seminaries, and the church at large) for a broadened, intentional ministry with and by older persons."

Under the direction of Barbara Payne, Director of the Gerontology Center of Georgia State University, and Earl D. C. Brewer, Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Religion at Candler School of Theology, the Gerontology Center at Georgia State developed and implemented a model project in 1986 for introducing aging content into theological education. That program was known as Gerontology in Theological Education (GITE). They reported to the Task Force

in 1986 that "all clergy are and will be serving congregations affected by the age changes in the structure of society. In addition to the increase in the number of adults over the age of 65, it is estimated that one out of every five adults over the age of 30 provide care and assistance to older relatives. The increase in life expectancy at birth broadens our view of the aging process and interventions. To meet these changes, preparation for the ministry needs to include gerontological education."<sup>65</sup>

### PROVIDING STUDIES IN OLDER ADULT MINISTRIES

The Task Force on Older Adult Ministries recommended to the 1988 General Conference priorities for each program board on the aging issue. One of the recommendations to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry was to "encourage the development of, including funding for, the active study of older adult ministries and gerontology in all theological programs developed for The United Methodist Church."

The 1992 *Book of Resolutions* states that seminaries and colleges are called upon:

1. To provide seminarians instruction on aging and experiences with older persons in the curriculum.
2. To prepare persons for careers in the field of aging.
3. To develop special professorships to teach

gerontology, and to provide continuing education for those who work with the elderly.

4. To stimulate research on the problems of aging, special concerns of minorities, the status of the elderly, and ministries with the elderly, the majority of whom are women.
5. To enable the elderly to enroll in courses and degree programs and to participate generally in the life of educational institutions.<sup>66</sup>

### **COURSES CURRENTLY OFFERED**

Although some of the seminaries do not list specific courses on aging or gerontology in their current catalogs, this area of concern is included in certain pastoral counseling courses. Course offerings change from year to year, and in some instances courses previously offered with a focus on older adult issues may reappear. In 1992, the seminary catalogs listed the following courses related to aging.

1. **United Theological Seminary**, Dayton, Ohio, was the first of our seminaries to provide training in the field of gerontology. Since 1972, students have had the opportunity to take such courses offered at the Gerontology Center at Otterbein Home in near-by Lebanon. Courses currently offered by the seminary include:

Religious Education and Ministry with  
Third-Age Adults

Ministry by, with, and for Older People;  
Aging, Religion and Spiritual Development  
Death and Grief

Coping with Loss and Grief (taught jointly with  
Wright State University Medical School)

2. **Saint Paul School of Theology**, Kansas City, Missouri, was also one of the pioneers in offering courses on aging. It has a full-time Oubri A. Poppele Chair in the field of gerontology. "The Oubri A. Poppele Center for Health and Welfare Studies (established in 1979 through a gift of Mrs. Oubri Poppele) is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the common experience of aging and encouraging the church to become a vital link between the older population and society. The Center faculty and staff integrate aging-related content and experience into the seminary program, provide field education for laity, ministers, students and others. Specializations in gerontology are offered at both the Master of Divinity [including the Master's degree in Theological Studies] and Doctor of Divinity levels. The Center includes an extensive library encompassing various aspects of gerontology."<sup>67</sup> Courses currently offered include:

Ministry Across the Life Span

Teaching/Learning: Lifelong Process

The Church As a Community of

Elders and Caring/Learning

Older Adult Alcoholism: Social or

Faith Issue

The Church's Ministry with Older Adults

Processes of Aging

Grief Ministry

Life Review and Ministry

Women and Aging

Caregiving and the Frail Elderly

Ministry with Aging Families

Aging in Racial and Ethnic Populations

Moral Dilemmas in Medicine  
and Health Care

Aging in Historical, Biblical and  
Theological Contexts

Gerontology Field Practicum

3. **Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary**, Evanston, Illinois, currently offers:

The Aging in Church and Society.

4. **Methodist Theological School in Ohio**, Delaware, Ohio, currently offers:

The Educational Ministry of the Church and  
Older Adults

5. **Perkins School of Theology**, Dallas, Texas, offers a Doctor of Ministry in research with older adults. Courses currently offered include:

Theology of the Human Life Cycle  
Adult Ministry

Religion, the Church, and Aging  
Ministry to the Bereaved

6. **Boston University School of Theology**, Boston, Massachusetts, currently offers:

Aging and the Search for Meaning  
Death and Bereavement

7. **School of Religion at Claremont**, Claremont, California, currently offers:

Christian Thought and Ministry at Life's End  
Critical Issues in Pastoral Care and Counseling  
in the Second Half of Life

Pastoral Care of the Critically Ill (taught in  
conjunction with Loma Linda University Hospital)

8. **Candler School of Theology**, Atlanta, Georgia, offers a certificate in gerontology in cooperation

with Georgia State University's Gerontology Center. Courses currently offered include:

Religion and Aging

9. **Drew Theological School**, Madison, New Jersey, currently offers:

Pastoral Care in Situations of Death, Dying, and Grief

10. **Gammon Theological Seminary**, Atlanta, Georgia, currently offers:

Ministry, Theology and Gerontology

11. **Duke Divinity School**, Durham, North Carolina, currently offers:

Theology and Spirituality of Aging

12. **Iliff School of Theology**, Denver, Colorado, currently offers:

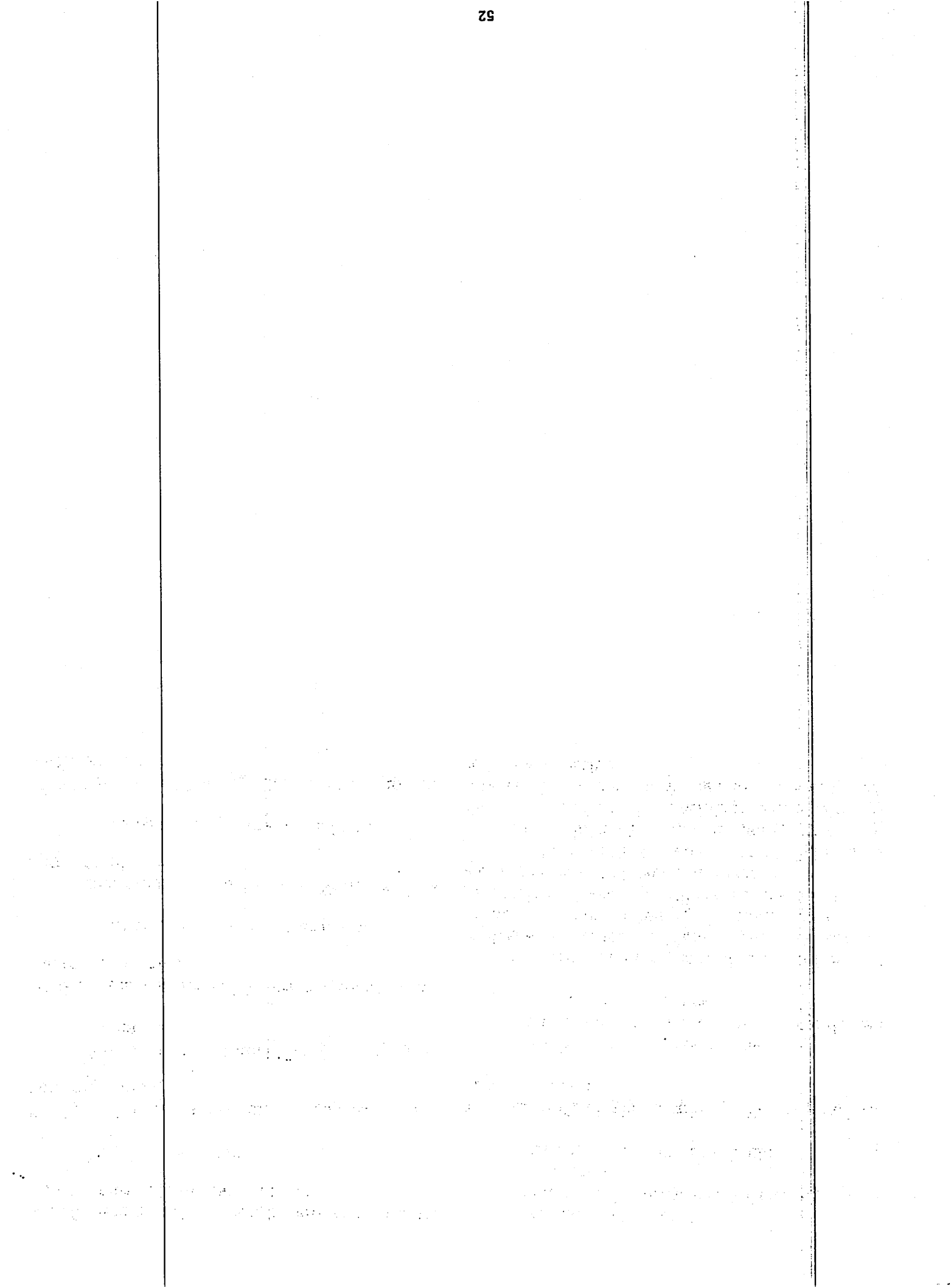
Ministry to the Aged  
Older Adult Ministries: A Challenge to the Church  
Pastoral Care of the Life Cycle

13. **Wesley Theological Seminary**, Washington, D.C., currently offers:

Death, Dying and Bereavement  
Two Elder Hostel programs are conducted on campus each year.

The 1989 Summer issue of *Diaconal Report* indicated that nine individuals expressed a desire to be part of a new network of persons working in gerontology. They may well become the nucleus for a growing area of diaconal ministry.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's relation to seminary training, the Division of Ordained Ministry works with annual conferences encouraging and sponsoring pre-retirement seminars.



# THE ADVISORY/COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON OLDER ADULT MINISTRIES (1988 - 1992)

**O**lder adult ministry in our church must of necessity adhere to the definite mandate of *by, with and for*, which was crafted so carefully and intentionally by those older adults at the Yahara Consultation, and which has been affirmed by subsequent Convocations. It must also be a ministry that recognizes the important contributions older adults can make to the church and community. To be viable, it must be intergenerational. Finally, it should recognize that well-rounded older adults need physical activity, intellectual stimulation, emotional support from others, and an opportunity for spiritual reflection as a daily discipline.

Bert Pruess-Jones,  
Member of The Task Force;  
Chairperson of The Advisory/  
Coordinating Committee

Both the 1984 and the 1988 General Conferences devoted considerable attention to the role of older adults in the life and mission of the church. This was reflected in the formation of the Task Force in 1984 and the Advisory/Coordinating Committee on Older Adult Ministries in 1988. The "Statement on Aging" published in *The Book of Resolutions* in 1984 was updated and revised in 1988, and confirmed in 1992. The Social Principles on the "Rights of the Aging" had been revised in 1984 in order to include some of the suggestions submitted by the 1982 National Consultation of Older Adults.

In addition to these legislative actions, both the 1984 and 1988 General Conferences authorized a number of disciplinary changes that were incorporated in those editions of *The Book of Discipline*. While some of the changes were relatively minor, others were quite significant. In total, they reflected a growing sensitivity on the part of The United Methodist Church to the need for including older people at all levels of the church structure and for recognizing their potential contribution to the church and its ministry.<sup>69</sup>

## FORMATION OF THE ADVISORY/COORDINATING COMMITTEE

In 1988, the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries recommended to the General Conference that an Advisory/Coordinating Committee on Older Adult Ministries be formed, with a majority of its members to be 65 years of age or older. J. William (Bill) Carroll, chairperson of the Task Force, presented the plan to the Conference which approved it 850 to 94. It was the sentiment of the delegates like Mattie Henderson

that won the day: "So many people feel that when they retire from their professional jobs, they are retired from the life of their church as well. I want us to help those people stay in ministry."<sup>70</sup>

The Advisory/Coordinating Committee was to be accountable to the General Council on Ministries and to work in cooperation with the program boards and agencies for the purpose of:

1. Coordinating older adult programs and resources in The United Methodist Church.
2. Assessing and advocating for older adult programs in the general agencies.
3. Training for the development of older adult ministries in the annual conference, district and local churches.
4. Advocating against the stigma and fear of being old and growing older, and against policies and practices which discriminate against older persons.
5. Identifying critical issues and program implications of the gifts of older persons, with special attention to older women, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with handicapping conditions.
6. Rallying older adults to a new consciousness of their power and potential.
7. Sharing in the initiation and planning of events for older adults at all church levels.
8. Coordinating information and referring requests and proposals.

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The membership of the Committee was to be composed of: over one-half of the voting members

were to be 65 years of age or older; three persons from each jurisdiction (these were to include one lay man, one lay woman, one clergy person, all of whom were to be 65 years of age or older, and at least one of whom was to be a racial/ethnic minority person); one voting member from each of the four program boards and one from the General Council on Ministries, and one staff person from each of these agencies without vote; an agency member from the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the General Commission on Religion and Race, and the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns; a representative from the Council of Bishops with vote; and the option of securing at least two persons professionally involved in gerontological research, education, institutional ministries, or other expertise related to older adult ministries, without vote; a representative from the Central Conference, named by the Central Conference bishops; representatives from other general agencies or groups could be invited to participate as observers or consultants, without vote.

The organizational meeting of the Advisory/Coordinating Committee met in Atlanta, Georgia, Feb. 4-5, 1989. Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald served as the representative from the Council of Bishops and Dr. Trudie Kibbe Preciphs as the Administration/Staff representative from the General Council on Ministries. The following officers were elected: Bert Pruess-Jones, Chairperson; Eleanor Richardson, Vice-Chairperson; C. R. Hager, Secretary; and James Hardcastle, Treasurer.

Early in the quadrennium teams composed of Committee members visited the offices of the four program boards to get acquainted, to become familiar with the board's work, to exchange information about mutual concerns, and to offer support in the development of programs for older adult ministries.

The Committee met again in the Spring of 1989; in Nashville, on December 9-10, 1989; in Austin, Texas; and on January 13-14, 1991, in Fort Worth, Texas, following the National Convocation on Older Adult Ministries. It was at a subsequent meeting in San Diego, California, July 26-28, 1991, that the proposal for the Committee on Older Adult Ministries was drafted and prepared for the 1992 General Conference.

Members of the Committee included:

Elfriede Beisiegel, Central Conference

Representative

George Buffalo

LaVerne Burton, GBOD Representative

Elbert Cole

Lillie Belle Cole, GBGM Representative

L. E. Crowson

Donald Cunningham, Christian Unity &

Interreligious Concerns

Chester E. Custer, Consultant

Donn Downall, UMPH Consultant and

*Mature Years* editor

Antonio Escareño

Lino A. Feliciano

Ernest Fitzgerald, Council of Bishops

Representative

C. R. Hager, GBCS Representative

Ann Hammons

James Hardcastle, GCOM Representative

Jane Hull Harvey, GBCS Staff Representative

Mattie Henderson

Basanti Jacobs

Bert Pruess-Jones, Status & Role of Women

Representative

Rosalie J. Lawson

Robert Lear, United Methodist News Service

Wayne Lindecker, AARP Representative

W. C. Link, Health & Welfare Ministries

Representative

Faustina Lucero, Religion & Race Representative

Thomas Mallonee, GBOD Representative

Paul Maves, Consultant

Iona McLaughlin

William H. Millett

Frank H. Nestler

Susanne Paul, GBGM Staff Representative

Alice Pena

Floyd Pierce

Trudie Kibbe Preciphs, GCOM Administration/

Staff Representative

Eleanor Richardson

James Robinson, GBHEM Representative

Roy Ryan, GBOD Staff Representative

Mary Kercherval Short, Women's Division

Representative

Richard Stewart, GBHEM Staff Representative

Wendell P. Taylor

Eldridge J. Waters

Harry Young

Ernest Wilson

## WHAT OLDER ADULTS ARE LOOKING FOR

A survey conducted by Dr. Warren Hartman for the General Board of Discipleship in 1990 revealed what older adults are looking for:

1. **Personal Enrichment.** They want to grow intellectually, socially, and spiritually.
2. **Fellowship within the Church.** They look to friends within the church to counter loneliness and to expand their horizons.



3. **Opportunities for Hands-on Experiences.** They want to be involved in significant volunteer service opportunities.
4. **Care and Support.** Many elderly who at one point in their lives were caregivers, now need for themselves the services they offered to others.
5. **Transmission of Our Faith Heritage.** They want to pass on to a younger generation their wisdom, learnings, and experiences.

### **A NATIONAL CONVOCATION ON OLDER ADULT MINISTRIES**

A National Convocation on Older Adult Ministries, held in Fort Worth, Texas, January 12-13, 1991, brought together 180 conference, district, and local Coordinators of Older Adult Ministries, as well as other leaders, to learn and share together ways in which their ministries to their constituencies could be enhanced. Sixty-two annual conferences were represented. The Convocation gave the General Boards an opportunity to acquaint the participants with their programs related to older adults. Most importantly, the Convocation significantly enlarged the network of persons committed to older adult ministry across the denomination. The Convocation gave additional impetus to annual conferences to establish Older Adult Councils.

Plenary speakers, worship and workshop leaders, focusing on the vital concerns of older persons, included Bishop Ernest A. Fitzgerald, Elizabeth Welch, Paul Maves, Duane A. Ewers, Kiyoko Kasai Fujiu, C. David Lundquist, Trudie Kibbe Preciphs, Bert Pruess-Jones, William H. Millett, Victoria Shepherd, Catherine Reeves, Susanne Paul, Morris Craig, Barbara Payne, Kathy Backus, Alice Pena, Rosalie Lawson, and Mattie Henderson. Workshops were held on such topics as elder abuse, planning for retirement, the racial and ethnic elderly, legal issues facing older adults, and aging as a global concern.

Dr. Elizabeth Welch, 85-year old writer, speaker and resource leader on aging issues, who gave the keynote address, reminded the participants that we are in a "longevity revolution." An unstoppable "quiet revolution" with "no guns fired" is creeping up on us. She affirmed that older adults are a "people of destiny" and the "architects of the future society... It will be the first time in history that the world will witness experienced elderly people who are able to form and generate ideas, instead of always being on the receiving end." Those in attendance were challenged to take the vision of the Convocation back to their homes, to share it with others, and to work toward its implementation.

### **KEEPERS OF THE DREAM**

Dr. Trudie Kibbe Preciphs, the administrative staff representative of the General Council on Ministries, had given able leadership to the Task Force and the Advisory/Coordinating Committee from 1984 to 1992. It was she who provided the linkage between these groups and GCOM. She was an advocate for the cause of the elderly and an inspiration to those with whom she worked.

She challenged the participants at the National Convocation to be "keepers of the dream." She said, "The torch of empowerment was entrusted to me from 1984-1992, when I met and worked with, and came to love older adult ministry. Members of the Task Force and Advisory Committee shared a vision of wholeness, inclusiveness, hope, trust and courage. They dared to dream that the church would recognize their gifts. They were successful in capturing the attention of the denomination by working hard and being faithful. I experienced their joy, felt their power, saw their passion and witnessed their self-determination, all combined with their love of God and the church. Their endurance, vitality, passion and commitment are unparalleled to any other group to which I have been a part."

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and their corresponding dates. The names are listed in a column on the left, and the dates are listed in a column on the right. The names are: John Doe, Jane Doe, and John Doe. The dates are: 1/1/1900, 1/1/1900, and 1/1/1900.

The following information was obtained from the records of the Bureau of Census, Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., regarding the number of persons who have been granted citizenship since January 1, 1940:

Year	Number of Persons Granted Citizenship
1940	1,234,567
1941	1,345,678
1942	1,456,789
1943	1,567,890
1944	1,678,901
1945	1,789,012
1946	1,890,123
1947	1,901,234
1948	1,912,345
1949	1,923,456
1950	1,934,567
1951	1,945,678
1952	1,956,789
1953	1,967,890
1954	1,978,901
1955	1,989,012
1956	1,990,123
1957	1,991,234
1958	1,992,345
1959	1,993,456
1960	1,994,567
1961	1,995,678
1962	1,996,789
1963	1,997,890
1964	1,998,901
1965	1,999,012
1966	1,999,123
1967	1,999,234
1968	1,999,345
1969	1,999,456
1970	1,999,567
1971	1,999,678
1972	1,999,789
1973	1,999,890
1974	1,999,901
1975	1,999,912
1976	1,999,923
1977	1,999,934
1978	1,999,945
1979	1,999,956
1980	1,999,967
1981	1,999,978
1982	1,999,989
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2018	1,999,999
2019	1,999,999
2020	1,999,999

# THE COMMITTEE ON OLDER ADULT MINISTRIES (1992)

**I**t is quite clear to me that if we are serious about developing an intentional ministry by, with and for older adults, the church must: (1) free itself from all forms of ageism and its fear of becoming a "graying" church; (2) reach out to older adults, receiving them into the faith community and inviting them to experience a new (or renewed) relationship with God; (3) nurture older adults in the Christian faith, enabling them to accept their life journey; (4) support older adults as they confront their losses, adapt to changes, and adopt new roles; (5) encourage older adults as they find their worth in their being, and not in what they have or do; and (6) empower older adults to be in service to persons of all ages, equipping them as they respond to the needs of the community and world.

Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.,  
General Board of Discipleship  
Representative:  
The Committee on Older Adult Ministries

In 1992, the General Conference established a Committee on Older Adult Ministries that would be administratively related to the General Board of Discipleship. It was believed that the Committee should be related to a program agency, that its focus should be the local church, that each of the general program agencies should be represented on the Committee since each has a significant area of ministry that relates to older adults, and that the General Council on Ministry should be represented because of its coordinating function. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., whose portfolio with the General Board of Discipleship encompasses older adult ministry, has the responsibility of relating to the Committee.

## PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Committee on Older Adult Ministries is to provide a forum for information sharing, cooperative planning, and joint program endeavors as determined in accordance with the responsibilities and objectives of the participating agencies. The Committee shall serve as an advocate for older adult concerns and issues, and support ministries by, with, and for older adults throughout The United Methodist Church and in the larger society.

The responsibilities of the Committee shall include the following:

1. Identify the needs, concerns, and potential contributions of older adults.

2. Promote a plan of comprehensive ministry by, with, and for older adults in local churches that includes spiritual growth, education, training, mission, service, and fellowship.
3. Support the development of resources that will undergird local church ministries by, with, and for older adults.
4. Advocate development and implementation of policies and services designed to impact systems and concepts which adversely affect older adults.
5. Educate and keep before the church the life-long process of aging with emphasis on the quality of life, intergenerational understanding, and faith development.
6. Encourage the development of resources and programs that can be used by Annual Conferences, jurisdictions and the denomination at large in training and equipping older adults for new roles in the ministry and mission of the Church.
7. Serve as a focal point for supplying information and guidelines on Older Adult Ministries to local churches.
8. Encourage coordination among agencies responsible for the development of resources, programs, and policies relating to older adult ministries.<sup>71</sup>

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The membership of the Committee shall be composed of one board member and one staff member

from each of the following agencies: the General Boards of Discipleship, Global Ministries, Church and Society, Higher Education and Ministry, General Council on Ministries; one member (board or staff) from the Commission on the Status and Role of Women and one from the Commission on Religion and Race; one retired bishop representing the Council of Bishops; one Central Conference representative; five older adults, one to be selected by each Jurisdictional College of Bishops; and no more than five additional members to be selected by the Committee for expertise, professional qualifications, and/or inclusiveness (racial/ethnic, handicapping condition, age, gender, laity, clergy or geographic distribution). Staff members shall provide appropriate liaison and reports to their respective agencies. They will have voice but not vote.<sup>72</sup> Members of the Committee include:

**General Board of Church and Society:**

Jane Hull Harvey  
Ralph Bates

**General Board of Discipleship:**

Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.  
Eleanor Richardson

**General Board of Global Ministries:**

Cathie Lyons  
Naomi G. Winchester

**General Board of Higher Education & Ministry:**

Richard Stewart  
Samuel Montgomery

**General Council on Ministries:**

Trudie Kibbe Preciphs  
George Duvall

**Commission on Christian Unity & Interreligious Concerns:**

J. W. Chatham, Jr.

**Commission on Religion & Race:**

Cecil H. Marcellus, Jr.

**Commission on the Status & Role of Women:**

Martha Forrest

**Central Conference Representative:**

Elfriede Beisiegel

**Council of Bishops Representative:**

W. T. Handy, Jr.

**North Central Jurisdiction:**

Mattie Henderson

**Northeastern Jurisdiction:**

Frank D. Dennis

**South Central Jurisdiction:**

Marvin McReynolds

**Southeastern Jurisdiction:**

S. Walter Martin

**Western Jurisdiction:**

J. Wesley Neal

**Consultants:**

Marvin Cropsey  
Suzanne Paul  
Chester E. Custer

The Committee will meet at least once a year in conjunction with a meeting of the General Board of Discipleship.<sup>73</sup>

**AGING AS A GLOBAL ISSUE  
ALSO ADDRESSED IN 1992**

In addition to the formation of the Committee on Older Adult Ministries at the 1992 General Conference, attention was focused on the "Aging of the Global Population." In 1991, Suzanne Paul, the General Board of Global Ministries representative on the "Church's Commission on International Affairs," visited various United Nations agencies in developing countries seeking to discover how those agencies were involved in aging issues, and how they could relate to the church's ministry, mission, and educational endeavors. Attending the International Conference on Aging, her concern centered on what could be done on the world scene related to our global older adult population. This project, funded by the General Council on Ministries, reflected the conviction of the Advisory/Coordinating Committee that the issues surrounding an aging society must be seen from an international perspective, and not simply in terms of our own nation.

The 1992 *Book of Resolutions* depicts the older adult issue from a global perspective:

The church is being asked to respond to a rapidly expanding number of older persons throughout the world, many of whom live in precarious circumstances in societies hard pressed to find the economic resources to cope with them. The situation holds possibilities for an invigorated ministry by, for, and with these older persons,...

The facts are clear: demographic data reveal that every month the world population of older persons, ages 55 and over, increases by more than one million persons. Eight percent of the increase occurs in so-called developing countries. Today these countries contain about 370 million older persons, but projections are that by the year 2020 they will contain more than one billion. The rate of growth of older persons is faster in these countries than in others.

Many of these older persons live in situations that make them very vulnerable. They live in rural areas, working the land; are predomi-

nantly female; and are illiterate. Rural areas have much older populations, since younger people tend to migrate to cities. Older persons are heavily concentrated in agriculture, with manufacturing jobs ranking a distant second. Women outlive men in virtually all countries. Most women past 65 are widows, a trend that is likely to continue. Less than 10 percent of older women in many poor societies are literate. Older persons belong

to families, but traditional social support based on family structures is eroding, leaving many in isolation and without persons to care for them in their last years." <sup>74</sup>

As never before, we are challenged to be attentive to our Christian calling and to the role of the church, in a ministry by, with, and for older adults, within our local communities and around the world.

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## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

**M**y vision of older adult ministry for the future is that it be: [1] intergenerational; [2] inclusive of all racial/ethnic persons, and women; [3] a way to utilize retired persons; [4] global, in that it is sensitive to the issues and needs of other cultural groups; [5] a way to reach out and motivate all local churches to program ministries by, with and for older adults; [6] educational, in order to equip persons to have a better image of the aging process, of older persons and their wealth of life experiences; and [7] empowering all.

Trudie Kibbe Preciphs,  
General Council on Ministries  
Representative on Older Adult Ministries

It is at the local level that a ministry by, with, and for older adults is really put to the test. What is occurring where we live, work and worship? Each congregation has a vital stake in putting into practice those values we espouse for older adults. We have written into our *Discipline* and *Resolutions* mandates and guidelines to direct our thought and action. Bishop Ralph T. Alton closed the Consultation at Yahara by saying: "Anything that happens in the life of the church is going to depend on our seeing that it happens. So although a part of our equation is that we are in the category of recipients of the church's ministry to the aging, another part of that same equation is that we are involved as the creators and instruments of that ministry." <sup>75</sup>

### WHAT EACH LOCAL CHURCH IS CALLED UPON TO DO

The 1992 *Book of Resolutions* calls upon each local church:

1. To become aware of the needs and interests of older people in the congregation and in the community and to express Christian love through person-to-person understanding and caring.
2. To affirm the cultural and historical contributions and gifts of the ethnic minority elderly.
3. To acknowledge that ministry to older persons is needed in both small- and large-membership churches.
4. To assure a barrier-free environment in which the elderly can function in spite of impairments.
5. To motivate, equip, and train lay volunteers with a dedication for this important ministry.

6. To develop an intentional ministry with older adults which:
  - (a) Assures each person health service, mobility, personal security, and other personal services.
  - (b) Offers opportunities for life enrichment including intellectual stimulation, social involvement, spiritual cultivation, and artistic pursuits.
  - (c) Encourage life reconstruction when necessary, including motivation and guidance in making new friends, serving new roles in the community and enriching marriage.
  - (d) Affirms life transcendence including celebration of the meaning and purpose of life through worship, Bible study, personal reflection, and small-group life.
7. To recognize that older persons represent a creative resource bank available to the church and involve them in service to the community as persons of insight and wisdom. (This could include not only ministry to one another, but also to the larger mission of the church for redemption of the world, including reaching the unchurched.)
8. To foster intergenerational experiences in the congregation and community including educating all age groups about how to grow old with dignity and satisfaction.
9. To assure that the frail are not separated from the life of the congregation, but retain access to the sacraments and are given assistance as needed by the caring community.

10. To provide guidance for adults coping with aging parents.
11. To cooperate with other churches and community agencies for more comprehensive and effective ministries with older persons including radio and television ministries.
12. To accept responsibility for an advocacy role

- in behalf of the elderly.
13. To develop an older adult ministry responsible to the Council on Ministries involving an adult coordinator or older adult coordinator, volunteer or employed. (An older adult council may be organized to facilitate the ministry with older adults.) <sup>76</sup>



## EPILOGUE

Our emphasis on ministries related to older adults in terms of **by, with and for**, reminds us of the crucial role each plays in our own lives and in the lives of all persons regardless of age.

The **by** aspect of ministry puts intention into action. Ours is a ministry inspired by the One who came not to be ministered unto but who gave his life for others. We are called to be servants: to bind up and to loosen, to visit and to feed, to forgive and to be forgiven, to seek justice and to love mercy.

Ours is also a ministry **with** others. The good that needs to be done cannot be accomplished alone. It suggests working side by side with others. But such ministry also draws upon the knowledge, discoveries and contributions of those who have gone before us. What others have been able to achieve is the foundation upon which we may build.

Think, also, of the innumerable times when someone has performed some needed ministry for us—stood up for or stood with us, believed in us when we could not believe in ourselves, has spoken a kind word, or has given us the gift of love. Our lives have been sustained and enriched because of what

others have done for us. We shall continue to need that kind of help as long as we live.

The **by, with and for** of ministry all work in concert, sometimes one becoming more dominant than the others, yet each sharing something of the other.

We rightly speak of the gift of maturity, suggesting that as we grow older the skills, knowledge and wisdom we have accumulated along the way should be shared with others. As older adults, we want to share what gifts we have with others. W. H. Oliver told the story of a young boy who stood beside an old captain of a Mississippi riverboat. Full of admiration for the famed navigator, he ventured to say, "Captain, Sir, I'll bet you know where every sandbar and snagged old tree is in this river!" The old man turned to the young boy and smiled, then slowly replied, "No, I can't say that I do, son; but I do know where the deep channel lies." Would that the same can be said of us!

Chester E. Custer

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